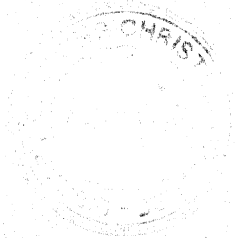


THE SUBSTANCE OF
MENTAL HEALTH



BY GEORGE H. PRESTON

PSYCHIATRY FOR THE CURIOUS
THE SUBSTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH

THE SUBSTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH

by

GEORGE H. PRESTON, M.D.

COMMISSIONER OF MENTAL HYGIENE
FOR THE STATE OF MARYLAND

*Illustrated with Sketches
by the Author*

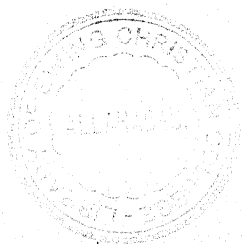
RINEHART & COMPANY, INC.

New York

Toronto

COPYRIGHT, 1943, BY GEORGE H. PRESTON
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE HADDON CRAFTSMEN, INC., SCRANTON, PA.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

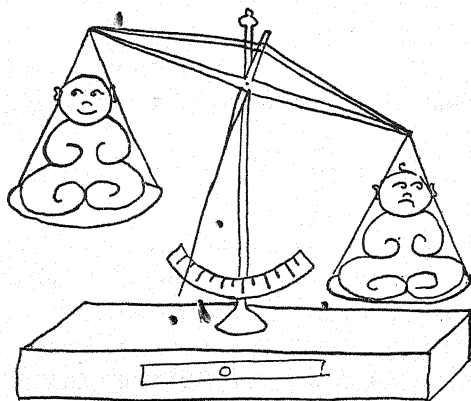
Many of us assume mental health to be our right. This book deals with what lies behind that right, how we come by it and how we may pass it on.



CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	WHAT TIPS THE BALANCE?	3
II	CHILDREN GROW UP IN FAMILIES	15
III	CHILDREN ARE PECULIAR POSSESSIONS	27
IV	YOU LEARN ABOUT OBEDIENCE	43
V	YOU LEARN WHAT TO EXPECT	57
VI	YOU LEARN ABOUT PEOPLE	71
VII	YOU LEARN ABOUT SEX	85
VIII	YOU LEARN TO BE AN ADULT	99
IX	WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?	111
X	CULTIVATION OF MENTAL HEALTH	123
XI	PROVIDING THE SUPPORTS	131
XII	THE STRUCTURE OF MENTAL HEALTH	145

THE SUBSTANCE OF
MENTAL HEALTH



II

WHAT TIPS THE BALANCE?

WHY DO SOME OF US ACHIEVE MENTAL HEALTH and others fail? Why do difficulties which look very much alike on the surface seem insurmountable to me and completely trivial to you? Why do you see hope shining in the spot where I see only despair? Something must tip the balance.

We are all exposed, as we live, to very similar experiences. We are loved and hated. We succeed and we fail. People praise us and belittle us. At one time we are ordered about and at another are granted the power to give orders. We meet dishonesty and inconsistency as well as charity and integrity. We lose what we love and are required by custom to cherish what

we do not want. Some of us meet life gracefully and enjoy it. Others fight, dodge, bewail their fate or acquire mental illness. What makes us behave so differently?

As a starting point we will consider what happens when a large group of people is exposed to smallpox. Some catch the disease and some do not. Why not all? The answer is simple. Some members of the group have been vaccinated. Let me make that statement a little clearer. When we are vaccinated, someone gives us a dose of virus, not enough to make us ill, but enough to do something to us. What this dose of virus does is to "teach" our bodies to take care of smallpox. In technical terms, the vaccination immunizes us.

Could it be possible that many of us, as children, are exposed to small doses of those factors which produce mental illness while we are still being taken care of in safe, protected places? Might the difference between the well and the sick rest on the size and frequency of the doses, the age at which they were administered and the care given during the administration? If we learn to handle the major threats to mental health while we are young, might we then be able to conquer them in later life? The idea seems worth exploring.

If we exclude certain conditions produced by specific infections, by direct injury such as being hit on the head with a brick, by poisons introduced into the body, and by starvation or exhaustion, no one believes that mental illness is caused by a single incident

in an individual's life. The condition we see is the result of repeated blows against which the individual has not learned to defend himself, blows all tending in the same direction, gradually forcing the individual off the road. Among these blows, some seem to be more significant than others.

The significant blows are those which damage the bonds by which we make contact with each other. We relate ourselves to our fellow men by love and fear and hate, by cooperation and competition, by praise and ridicule, by authority and obedience, by means of work, play, sex activity, food, drink and the exchange of ideas. Make it difficult for me to love or hate, to obey or to compete, to play or to exchange ideas, and you make it difficult for me to live in the world of my fellow men. When you do that, you force me into isolation, you force me to build up defenses and to keep other people at a distance. When that happens, I am being pushed toward mental ill health.

One factor stands out. Man himself is the chief threat to man's mental health. It is not the ordinary vicissitudes of life but the complications man has added to them that make trouble. We could meet sex or fear or failure or competition without danger to our mental health except for the fact that man has added customs and meanings and threatening consequences to these ordinary problems of living.

Begin with competition. Simple competition for food and warmth and reproductive opportunity is common to all animals including man; but man, particularly civilized man in the western world, has

added something new. To failure in competition, he has added disgrace. This is a uniquely human addition. If you or I fail, we do not quietly starve or freeze. We keep on living, labeled "Failure." People may give us clothes and food, but if we cannot win what we need for ourselves, we are looked down upon and classed as inferior. We not only fail, we also acquire a derogatory label.

While few of us are total, hundred percent failures, an even smaller number manage to avoid some failures in one direction or another. Because we are taught early and often that failure to achieve the goals set by our group is disgraceful, many of us acquire an overwhelming fear of failure. What is more destructive is that some of us acquire a fear that our fellow man may find out that we really are not even as smart as luck has given us the opportunity to appear. When we feel that way, we have to see to it that our fellow man does not find out too much about us. Very often we have to hide our failures, our mistakes, and our foolishness, even from ourselves. Then we begin to invent reasons with which to explain failures. When the reasons are good enough to fool the inventor, mental ill health lies ahead. The cause of the illness is not failure but something man has added to failure and taught us to believe.

We compete not only for such concrete essentials as food and warmth and wealth and wives. We compete for affection, for love, for attention, for praise. This complicates the problem. It is easy to measure concrete achievements. We can invite our friends to

dinner and prove that we are smart enough to earn more food than we can eat. We can dress our wives up in jewels and furs and show the world that we have a lot of "things" we do not actually need. These are simple measurements. I would like to ask you how you know your wife gives you as much love and affection as a wife should give a husband. How do you know that you get your fair share of attention and respect and reward for the work you do in the office or the kitchen? You do not know because you have no measure. You can only judge by the way you feel about it.

Many of us, if we do not get what we *feel* is our fair share, tend to believe that there must be something wrong with *us*, that we must be different from other men. This is important because any feeling of being too different from our fellows in ways of which they do not approve makes easy, unguarded contact impossible. Factors which make comfortable living with other humans difficult menace mental health.

We have been talking about competition and the fear of competition as if they were unchanging qualities. Actually we learn about competition and we learn to fear it as we live. The lessons, particularly those in regard to competition for attention, praise, and affection, begin early and are taught at home. Early competition is not severe or ruthless, and home is a safe, protected, comfortable place, able to withdraw the sting from most early failure. In an ordinary home, competition is experienced in small, non-fatal doses and the resultant wounds are, in large measure, kissed

and made well. Note the words "ordinary home." If something upsets the balance which makes up an ordinary home, competition within the family can become cruel and destructive almost beyond belief.

Suppose a child met competition in a loving home, in small doses, and was taught what to do about it. Suppose a child learned, very early, that he was not different from other people and therefore expected people, with few exceptions, to like him for what he was without strenuous efforts on his part to attract, bribe or demand attention. Such a child would be better able to face competition when he met it in adult life and one of the major risks to mental health would have been removed. He would have been immunized by small doses safely administered.

Fear must also be met. If we are to stay alive, we must learn to fear some things, but if we learn to be afraid of every new thing and every new person, life will be difficult and mental illness more likely. Early experience with what to fear and what not to fear can be valuable, particularly if this experience is combined with lessons as to what to do when afraid.

Fear of admitting fear is another hazard to mental health which man himself has created. A frightened animal can run or hide. Man demands that man conceal or at least explain his fear. Very often the psychiatrist meets men who, because they have felt fright, fear that they are cowards and then spend the rest of their lives trying to convince themselves and the world how brave they are. Such men can rise to heroism, but can also drift to foolhardiness, bragging,

misery, serious accidents or mental ill health. Lessons in meeting fear, admitting it frankly, and then doing what is necessary, either fighting or retreating, are valuable. Complete immunity to fear is certainly not desirable but immunity to the fear of fear can be acquired and is a mental health asset.

Hate we must also learn to handle. Hate is a normal human emotion and yet man's customs in regard to hate are extraordinarily inconsistent. You must "love thy neighbor as thyself" and yet "neighbor" must be so defined that when you go to war you can hate and kill. Little children say, "I hate you," and are promptly told they are wicked. The truth is that for the moment they do hate and had better learn what to do about it.

Notice, for example, what happens when a little girl says to her brother, "I hate you." Her mother promptly replies, "You are a wicked, bad girl. Tell your brother, right now, that you love him." The little girl knows she hates, and because her mother says so, she believes she is wicked. If the mother has impressed this lesson severely enough, the girl will feel wicked again and again, every time she experiences the thoroughly normal human emotion of hate. That is important, but something more important has happened. She has been taught that if she tells a lie and covers up hate she is good. She has learned that words can cover up feelings and can turn what we call evil into what we call good. Concealing hate from yourself and acting a lie about it lays the foundation for much mental illness.

A little experience with hate and how to deal with it, before you are strong enough to destroy the hated object, is helpful. Understanding that hate is a natural impulse which must be controlled, but which, in itself, is not wicked, reduces the danger of thinking yourself abnormal because you sometimes feel strong normal emotions. A knowledge that saying "I love you" never cancels but only covers up "I hate you" can be of incalculable value for mental health.

Authority is another common factor which relates living people to one another. Someone gives orders to most of us. Most of us hold authority over some one. Violent resentment toward all authority or insatiable appetite for the exercise of authority over helpless dependents can make life with other people a most unhappy experience.

It is obvious that obedience and responsibility, the two opposite aspects of our attitude toward authority, are learned at home. Here again the conditions under which we learn the lesson and the size of the dose are matters of great importance. If the dosage is not properly gauged, we may live our lives with a violent resentment towards all orders, with fear of authority, or with a supine need for orders at every turn. Neither method makes for happy living.

Similar conditions hold in regard to responsibility. We may demand responsibility in excess because we have been taught that it is our prime duty and we may thus overload ourselves with the cares of the world and the people in it, or we may fear it and shirk

it completely. If we go to either extreme, our relations with our fellow men will be uncomfortable.

I recently saw a husband and wife who illustrated one of the variations which can be played on this obedience-responsibility theme. The man had had an indulgent, overprotective mother. She had taken all the responsibility and had never exposed her son to the smallest dose. Every time he made a mistake, she saved him. If he misbehaved, she made excuses. If he fell, she picked him up. He leaned on her and never learned responsibility. Because of her excessive indulgence, he also failed to learn obedience of any sort. She lived until her son was thirty. Before that time, he had learned to lean not only on his mother but on alcohol.

This man married a woman who had been completely dominated by her family. They had taught her to obey orders and to do nothing else. They had also taught her that people would not love her unless she was docile, obedient and dependent. She lived according to that pattern by telling people how nervous she was, by presenting all manner of ailments and by appealing for love through helplessness and dependence.

These two people married and tried to hang onto each other. Neither one had been taught to stand alone so both of them fell. Failure was built into that marriage by the way obedience and responsibility had been taught.

Change, vacillation and inconsistency are human

attributes to which all of us must practice adjustment. They are particularly important because much happiness in life is based on faith. We expect to be able to predict the future from the past. We expect today's values and standards to last into tomorrow. We expect to be allowed to do tomorrow what we are permitted to do today. We could never learn arithmetic with an animated multiplication table nor find our way with a rubber map. If someone in the family says "Yes" and someone else says "No," if we must do one thing today and are punished for the same thing tomorrow, if mother smothers us with love in the morning and is obviously resentful of us at night, we have a poor chance of learning to live. Consistency is one of the prime requisites of any training for mental health, but even consistency can be overdone.

We live with changeable people in a changeable world. We will meet new customs, radical variations of old ideas and sudden changes of behavior in familiar people. While consistency is the basis for all training, we must learn what to do when we are faced by the novel and the unexpected. Somewhere we must learn to meet change without losing faith. There is an advantage in having fallible humans rather than saints for parents.

What we have said in regard to consistency is also true in regard to honesty, truthfulness, justice, morality, and a large group of generally accepted virtues. We must learn their value and we must learn to practice them, but we must also learn that they are neither universal nor completely applicable under all

circumstances. Early exposure to small immunizing doses of human unreliability is helpful.

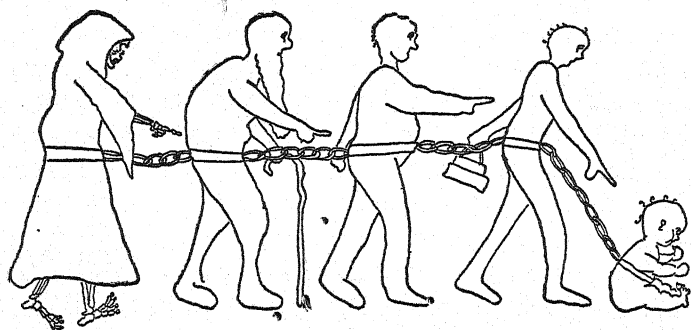
Ridicule, belittling, sarcasm and shaming constitute the most deadly poisons to which the developing individual is ever exposed, and yet they are among the commonest weapons which man uses against man. The faintest overdose administered too early or too frequently may destroy self-respect and self-confidence, two characteristics which, once destroyed in youth, very rarely grow back. Minus self-confidence and self-respect, no man can live happily with his fellows. When these qualities are lacking, something must be substituted and, in this area more than in all others, the substitutes tend to take the form of mental illness.

Inevitably, at one time or another, all of us will be exposed to sarcasm, ridicule and shame. We must learn what to do about them because they cannot be completely avoided. It is much better for us to receive our immunizing doses while we are living safely at home with people who recognize the dangers and can soften the shock. There is no possible justification for the use of sarcasm, ridicule or shaming either at home or at school! Entirely adequate immunizing-doses will certainly come from the outside. The major risk is that the dose will be too large. Parents and teachers have an urgent duty to protect and foster self-respect and self-confidence. Remember that if they are once destroyed, they rarely return to life and that a human without some measure of self-confidence and self-respect is the easiest prey for mental illness.

It may seem that the dangers of damaged self-respect and self-confidence are being magnified. This is certainly not the case. Damage in this area strikes directly at the foundation of mental health. There are no healthy substitutes for these qualities. Their recultivation is a tedious and precarious undertaking.

We have discussed some of the threats to mental health. I have pointed out that they are actually the ordinary problems of human existence which only threaten mental health when early experience has failed to teach us how to deal with them in ways which permit us to live comfortably with our fellow men. We have considered the possibility that small immunizing doses of essential experience, administered early, while the individual is still safely supported by parental care, might make the difference between health and illness.

Fortunately for all of us, there is a human institution designed to teach living. This institution is the family. What I propose to do in the following chapters is to discuss the lessons which are taught in the ordinary home and to point out that the ordinary family may provide the necessary immunizing doses of human experience almost automatically.



III

CHILDREN GROW UP IN FAMILIES

CHILDREN GROW UP IN FAMILIES. IF CHILDREN hatched out of eggs and were then left to shift for themselves, we could talk quite comfortably about "child" guidance or "child" training, as if it were something to be put on an individual child like a warm suit of underwear or rubbed in like ointment to cure the itch. Children do, however, grow up with fathers and mothers. These fathers and mothers in turn had parents of one sort or another, back to the beginning of time. Each preceding generation has tried to teach the next how to live. Because of this unbroken chain, mental health is primarily a family matter.

Many of our parents and grandparents learned to live fairly happily in a village, or on a farm, with-

out automobiles, or movies, or radios; without "consolidated schools," or one-piece bathing suits, or cigarette cases for high school girls. They lived in communities in which churches were much stronger and public health activities much weaker than today. In the homes in which these parents grew up, there were some really important jobs for each child if the whole family was to be comfortable. There was wood to be cut, ashes to be carried out, a garden to be hoed, and possibly a horse or cow or chickens to be cared for. Probably at one time or another the parent, as a child, had to run, actually run, and run fast, to a neighbor's or to the doctor's for urgent help, instead of seeing his mother step to the telephone and call the doctor from the next county.

Parents who themselves learned to become useful citizens in such "good old days" must teach children to become happy, secure, and useful in a world which is vastly different. Today almost no one is born in the house in which his father was born. His mother may come from Vermont and his father from South Africa. Everything is on the move: people, moral and economic standards, food habits, even language.

This, of course, is no new situation. Each set of elders looking at the rising generation has said, "If I had done that to *my* father, he would have smacked me down." Each generation makes new achievements, develops new methods of modifying nature, of providing for comfort and destruction. Yet each adult group passes on to growing youths, who will utilize

these new achievements, a way of life which is a full generation out of date.

While the child learns to use a vast array of new mechanical achievements, he also learns habits of meeting friends and strangers; methods of adjusting to comparison, competition, success or failure; standards of value; attitudes of expecting friendliness or attack, love or hate; a whole set of ways of living. The mechanical achievements belong to the child's generation, the ways of living to the generation in which the parents grew up.

I remember going to a cabin in the mountains to ask a question. The door was open so I knocked on the door-frame. As I knocked, I saw a woman and four children in the cabin. The next instant the four children dived under the bed, turned around, and from the darkest corner, looked at me like a group of frightened chipmunks under a stone. The mother stood in front of the bed and said nothing, but her feelings were easily read from her expression and the way she stood. These children were learning something about meeting strangers. The mother did not dive under the bed but her general pattern of behavior was the same. This pattern had probably been necessary, and possibly lifesaving, to the grandmother. To her, any stranger might have been an Indian with a hatchet. To the mother, the stranger might well be a revenue officer with a rifle. For the children, when they grow up, if they are to live in a city apartment or travel on the subway, this attitude toward strangers must be modified by experience just

as their mother's had been. She met me with a suspicious look, not with a gun in her hands.

Those of us who are interested in mental health believe that attitudes, acquired early and impressed deeply, tend, in spite of modification, to influence behavior throughout life particularly in sudden, threatening, or emotionally significant situations. Some of us believe that fear and suspicion of strangers and foreigners handed down from generation to generation by copying parental attitudes may be one important factor in the present world chaos.

This attitude toward strangers is just one item, introduced because it is familiar and easily demonstrated. The behavior pattern of an individual—the way he thinks and feels and acts when he meets another human being, when he must make a decision, when he must do something about something, that part of a living person which we label character or personality—is made up of countless attitudes and feelings learned from parents, teachers, and other significant adults. The important facts are that the attitudes are learned, that they are learned early, chiefly within the family group from parents or parent-substitutes. The structure of mental health is built of these attitudes.

Please remember that we are not talking about how to stop Mary's having temper tantrums, or about how to cure nervousness or disobedience or delinquency. Curing sick people is an art. It can only be practiced successfully when the practitioner has a wide knowledge of a particular group of illnesses and

very detailed information about the one individual he is to treat. Often some mother will come to me after a public meeting and say, "Doctor, how can you stop boys from stealing?" In the first place, no one can stop "boys" stealing. It may be possible to stop a *particular boy*, but to do that you would have to know a lot about that one boy. You would have to know about his brothers and sisters, about his mother, about his father, about how the members of the family treat each other, about the time his mother told him, "No, I haven't got any money," when he had just seen a quarter in her purse. You would have to know about his intelligence, his school, his physical condition, his companions, and about what sort of stealing he was doing. More than all else, you would have to know how this particular boy felt about what was going on.

You cannot write rules showing how to "stop stealing" or "cure temper tantrums" or "overcome nervousness." A really wise man might write a book about how to change the behavior of one particular boy at one particular time in the boy's life, while he was living in a certain home in a certain town. One book about how to treat "boys" would be very difficult and of very doubtful value applied to Johnny Doe, age seven, and Richard Roe of a different family background, in a different town, age seventeen.

We are not talking about any such set of rules. We are talking about prevention, about how the stage may be set so that an essentially healthy infant may have the greatest chance of remaining mentally healthy. The existence of sound physical health is not

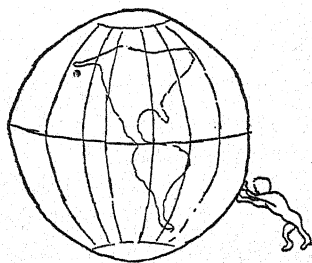
absolutely essential to the program. Cripples can lead mentally healthy lives, blind people are not necessarily sick mentally, even stupid people can learn to live happily and usefully with their fellow men. When they do, we can think of them as mentally healthy in spite of their handicaps.

Our problem is to discover what attitudes toward oneself, toward other people, and toward external circumstances seem to offer the greatest chance for mental health and under what circumstances such attitudes are most likely to flourish in a family.

As a starting point, we might consider the situation of very young infants. Of course, no one ever worked his way inside the mind of an infant and found out how he felt about being hungry or wet or cold, or about his toes or his mother's arms, or about the few other items that are all-important to him. What is said here is all said by inference, but I believe the inferences are good.

Think of the infant as sitting, big and important, in the middle of a very small world. We can say, "*It's cold,*" "*I am hungry,*" "*It's noisy here,*" "*I'm warm and comfortable.*" For the infant, it seems probable that the "world," "everything" is warm or cold or comfortable or hungry. For the infant, "hungry" is probably as all-pervasive as "noisy," as personal and as impersonal. Now think about another aspect of the infant's situation. He has one weapon of offense and defense—his cry. We think of him as helpless, but notice—he cries and "*I'm hungry*" ceases. He cries and "*It's cold*" changes. He rules his world with a

single weapon. We cannot do that. By comparison the average adult has no control whatever over his surroundings. He must use many weapons and many tricks if he is to remain comfortable. Picture the infant as an Omnipotent Being in the center of a small world.



Now think of the adult. Today his world is large and full of other people, some of whom care nothing about him, and many of whom are bent on destroying him. He is no longer in the center of a small world which he can control by yelling. He is on the edge of a huge world which may crush him at any minute.

The process of growing up is the process of moving from the center of the small circle to the edge of the large one. The technique of mental health is the technique of making this progress and of arriving at some location in the large world still possessing the ability to do something and to enjoy doing it in friendly association with the few other adults who happen to occupy the same spot in time and space. Making this trip is no easy job. Some people refuse to try and then we have a group of "adult infants."

Some make the trip only if a stronger person holds them up and we see chronic dependents, emotionally and financially. Some develop all sorts of tricks to deceive themselves and the rest of the world into believing that they have completed the journey, and some turn back in a vain attempt to recapture security which they seem to remember. These we call "mentally ill." A few dive off into oblivion. Most of us make the trip, damaged slightly or severely, and settle down somewhere in the periphery. We call ourselves "mentally sound."

What we must do if we are to plan for mental health is to try to discover and avoid those factors which make some people refuse to try this trip, those factors which make the trip particularly difficult, and those factors which make a few turn back.

If you will carry this purely fanciful picture a little further, remembering that it is fanciful and not to be interpreted literally, we can discuss, in the same terms, some of the general factors which make progress from infancy to adulthood difficult. We pictured Growing Up as movement from the center of a circle toward some point on the periphery. Think of it as a journey over a narrow bridge. If, before you start, your two instructors argue constantly about how you should go, if one says you should crawl on your stomach and the other says you should run, if one says you should surely carry a walking stick and the other says it will get between your legs and trip you, or if both change their minds frequently, you will have a hard time starting.

Again, if one of your advisers carries you, never letting you stand on your own feet, never letting you walk, fall down and get up again, and if you should some day be left alone, forced to go on by yourself, you may find the rest of the road very difficult.

Still again, if one of your advisers tells you that you are stupid, clumsy and careless, that you always make mistakes, that you always fall, and that if you do fall no one will come to help you, your chances of going ahead bravely, securely and happily are almost nil.

If, on the other hand, your advisers tell you nothing about the dangers, lead you to believe that the road is broad and safe, that nothing can happen to you, that you do not need to be careful or learn anything, you may wake up to a bad fright at some point. Still more, if your advisers give you false information or lead you to believe that you will acquire knowledge miraculously when you need it, you may stumble over commonplace obstructions.

If someone stands on the bank and says, "Now put your right foot out in front; now put it down; now lift your left foot," you may be a "perfectly obedient" child but, as soon as the advice stops, you will stop. Only parents who expect to live forever should have perfectly obedient children.

One other type of advice may be dangerous. People walk this same path with you. Before you start over the difficult portions, you must learn how to meet these people and what to do about them. If you fear them all and either fight or run, you will be lonely

and you will miss many chances for help. On the other hand, you cannot always hang around someone's neck. A combination of these two methods, first fighting and then hanging on, is even more dangerous, and yet it is a pattern which you have ample opportunity to learn from your advisers because many parents practice it constantly, changing from one method to the other during a single breakfast hour.

Finally, if you start out blind or crippled or stupid, or even with painful feet, the trip may be slow and difficult and you will need help.

This is a fanciful presentation, but it follows the facts. The path from infancy to adulthood, if it is to be followed happily and securely, needs certain skills. Those skills exist in human beings. As a matter of fact, they exist very widely and most humans make the trip without too much damage. The skills are learned from parents, probably largely by watching parents. No one can write a set of rules by which parents could guarantee themselves mentally healthy children. All that can be done is to point out and discuss those aspects of living which seem to offer children their best chance.

If Johnny calls his grandmother an "old fool," I do not know if he should be smacked, gently reprimanded, made to apologize, have his mouth washed out with soap, or be told that he is not yet old enough to repeat what he has often heard his father say. I do not know Johnny or his father or, for that matter, his grandmother. If I can be sure that Johnny, as he lives, learns to believe that some one person

really loves him, not because he is good or beautiful, but because he is Johnny; if I know that he is not taught to feel too different, either for better or for worse, from the rest of the world; if he is allowed to grow up unashamed of his own ideas, his body, or its physiological functions; if he does not acquire too great resentment of authority; and finally, if he learns from his parents how adults should treat each other, then I can be sure he will have a good chance of remaining mentally healthy. He may still think his grandmother is an old fool, but he will probably not tell her so.

That is the briefest possible outline of what a person needs by way of foundation for mental health. These essentials can be supplied by ordinary family life. For example, the ordinary child is supplied by his family with love and protection. Under ordinary conditions, these are shared with the other members of the family so as to supply each individual with the secure love which his comfortable development requires. They then constitute part of the foundation for mental health. When, however, some accidental circumstance or some personal peculiarity of one or the other parent focuses these otherwise valuable assets on one individual in the form of "Devouring Love" or "Pathological Overprotection," they can become the causative agents of future mental illness.

A similar situation holds true in regard to those items which contribute to the building up of the child's own opinion of himself. The minor criticisms and comparisons, the belittling and praise which are

everyday incidents of family life, serve to prepare many children for the inevitable conflicts of adult life. If they are completely avoided, the child misses essential training. If, because of peculiar circumstances, criticism and belittling are heaped upon one child or if the child, because of some personal experience, becomes inordinately sensitive; these usually immunizing factors may become damaging rather than protective.

The family is also the setting in which the child learns to adjust to external authority. Again, early experiences can be immunizing or destructive, depending on the focus and the dosage. The child must learn to adjust to external authority and should do so in a secure setting in which authority is tempered with mercy. Comfortably learned, this lesson is invaluable. If he misses this lesson or if the lesson is so crudely applied that it arouses only hatred, fear or resistance, the groundwork for future mental ill health has been laid.

Remember that this process of growing up begins before birth and is continuous. In essence, it is a process of moving from the center of a very small circle to some spot in a very large universe. In that process, complete protection is exchanged for relative freedom of action at the cost of vastly increased responsibility. This is not a simple road to follow and the advice and example given any individual as he learns to make his first advances may determine his progress and his future mental health.



III

CHILDREN ARE PECULIAR POSSESSIONS

IF YOU CARE FOR CHILDREN PROPERLY, YOU LOSE them. If you paint your house and fertilize your fields, you keep your property and it continues to serve you. When it is at its peak of value, it never walks off and starts working for itself. If you *lose* your property, you fail. If you *keep* your son or daughter, you fail. Children grow up in families but they must also grow out of them.

Children, for their own good, must belong to someone who will be proud of them because they do belong, who will care for them and protect them, who will sacrifice anything, including life, so that they may live. There is good evidence that loving care, handling, petting, cuddling are almost as necessary for small children as are good food and fresh air. There

are records of children in hospitals who failed to gain, who picked up new infections constantly, who seemed almost hopeless, yet who suddenly blossomed out when taken home and petted by loving mothers. It also happens that children in infant asylums who are washed, fed, and put to bed in an endless routine of proper hygienic care become listless, indifferent and stupid. I remember five little children from such an institution who were brought into a clinic. They sat in five little chairs like a row of cabbages in a garden. There was not an expression in the lot of them. They had been starved for loving so long that they were permanently damaged.

Children's life, health and happiness depend on belonging to some loving possessor. If the possessor hangs on too long children never grow up. What makes some parents hang on too long? Two factors are at work, one arising from attitudes toward possessions in general and the other from the fact that children are peculiar possessions. These two aspects should be discussed separately.

In our present society, possessions have come to represent security. We own things and we count on them to fall back on if fate should catch up with us. We save and scrimp and scheme and even fight to protect them. A few people save mountains of perfectly useless junk and do so because saving things, having things, holding on to things gives satisfaction entirely aside from the value of the things saved. I see this exaggerated among some of my older patients who hang onto pathetic bundles of papers they can

no longer read, to balls of string, broken false teeth, or bank books from which the last cent was drawn years before. They do so because their little hoards still have symbolic value even after everything else has been wiped away.

If we think about the behavior of infants, it is not difficult to picture the onset of this evaluation of possessions. One of the infant's major jobs is to eat. This requires grabbing hold and holding on. Turning loose marks the end of an immediate pleasure. Another of the infant's major jobs is finding out about things. If he lets go, the thing disappears and the interesting lesson stops. The all-important jobs of living and learning begin with holding on to what you have. Turning loose means painful deprivation.

We also find, early in our lives, that possessions give power. If we have something someone else wants, we can bargain with it and buy what we think we desire. We bargain not only with concrete "things" but with many intangibles. Parents teach us to trade with love and affection. If we wash our faces and don't say bad words, our mothers will love us more. If we are very loving and affectionate, we can sometimes persuade our parents to let us stay up a little later at night. We learn that, with demonstrated love, we can buy privilege.

Later on, in our society, what we *have* comes to stand for our value. We say a man who *has* a million dollars is *worth* a million. We fill our houses with things we do not need and dress ourselves up with jewelry to prove to the world, by our possessions, how

able we are. To a greater or lesser extent, all of us do this and thus build up within ourselves an attitude of profound respect for possessions.

Actually, of course, possessions do have concrete value for security. A cellar full of coal can take the sting out of the prospect of winter. A bank account tends to balance a baby. There is both real and symbolic security in possessions. For certain individuals, the need to amass possessions and to hold on to them, coupled with a constant dread of loss, may become the most significant factor in life.

Children are possessions. When inordinately possessive people have children, they do not treat them as developing humans who should become independent, but as personal property to be held onto at all cost. Such children are exposed to the danger of never being allowed to become independent adults simply because they are possessions which cannot be given up.

Children are not only possessions, they are also unique possessions. They are human possessions who resemble their parents. This may give rise to a whole series of difficulties. Let me illustrate one type.

"I came to this town when I was fourteen, with thirty cents and a hole in the seat of my britches." That father's son was having hard going by the time I saw him. That father had been kicked around, he had been cold and hungry and the memory was still fresh. He had become successful and he could now afford to give his son all the things that he, as a boy, had wanted but could not have. His son must like all these

things, take them *and* be grateful. The son just didn't and wasn't. The son wanted to work and make things and maybe fight. He had the same qualities which had carried his father from thirty cents and a hole in his britches to success and dress clothes. The son was given no chance to use these powers.

The father was sure that if he himself had had more education, his road would have been easier. His only conscious idea was to make life easier for his son, and therefore his son must go to college whether he was suited for college or not. What the son was given and what he was forced to do "for his own good," was not regulated by the son's needs but by the father's idea of what he wished he might have had when he was a boy. Such children always remind me of saxophones. Their parents try to play tunes on them and the result is discord. The tunes are played for the parent's satisfaction; they relate to the parent's past and the child is supposed to be a docile instrument. The trouble is it will not work.

The same pattern shows up in many ways. Fathers, like the man with the patch, try to live their own lives over again through their sons. They try to steer their sons into medicine or law or the church in which they feel that they would have done so well if they had had the chance. Mothers try to recapture and live over again the thrills of their girlhood by insisting that their daughters go to the sort of parties they enjoyed and behave the way they would like to have behaved when they were girls. You can see at once that such pressure has very little relationship to

the child's needs or abilities or to the world in which the child is actually living. Because children are human possessions, resembling their parents, they are exposed to risks of this type. As a result, the psychiatrist is called upon to pull many somewhat scarred square pegs out of round holes.

Another type of relationship develops because children resemble parents. I knew a mother whose husband was indifferent and neglectful. This mother, without any understanding of what she was doing, turned her son into a psychological husband. She demanded his attention and affection, she expected him to be solicitous of her welfare, she shared all her worries with him, and she hid her jealousy even from herself when she criticized and found fault with every girl her darling son so much as looked at. That mother was sure she had a dutiful and loving son, but any psychiatrist would know at once that the son had a poor chance of ever establishing himself as an independent human. Fathers can do the same things to daughters equally unconsciously and with equally disastrous results.

This relationship of possessor and possessed which exists between parents and children is often accentuated by accidents and tragedies within the family circle. Illness can contribute to overcaution and overprotection. The age of the child when the illness occurs, the severity and length of the illness, the mother's previous experience with similar illness in other children, can all serve to stimulate anxiety and increase the tendency to overprotection. Such condi-

tions, of themselves, probably do not create chronic overprotection but they do add fuel to any already existing tendencies in that direction.

In addition to these direct stimulants of parental overpossessiveness there are indirect, compensatory factors which may act even more powerfully. Certain insecure parents cannot admit, even to themselves, that they sometimes come very near a faint wish to be relieved of responsibility for these lovable childish nuisances. This is thoroughly human but some parents feel that any such idea is wicked. What often happens then is that parents, hazily aware of normal emotions, overcome by shame and guilt, become more possessive, more protective, and more apprehensive. Every time the child sneezes, the parents have a fit. Every time the child yells in the middle of the night, they call the doctor. Every time the child complains, they keep him home from school. They diet and medicate children into permanently helpless infancy and thus satisfy themselves that they are loving and careful parents.

Not long ago I tried to explain a similar type of behavior to a judge. We were speaking of a woman who worried about her husband. She would not let him go fishing because she was afraid he would be drowned and she loved him so much. He must not go hunting because the gun might go off and kill him. He had to call up from the office every morning to tell her that he had not been run over by an automobile. I told the story to the judge. He looked at me sagely and said, "You mean the wish was father

to the thought." Remember that this is very often true.

A somewhat similar type of compensatory over-protection is occasionally shown by stepmothers and foster mothers. Because they are artificial rather than real mothers, they unconsciously overact their parts in an attempt to protect themselves from any possible appearance of neglect or coldness. They are so careful and so protective that they lean over backward.

The factors which we have been discussing are those which sensitize the possessive feelings of parents toward their children. Such sensitization results in certain quite characteristic types of parental behavior. One type is represented by mothers who direct their children's every move, who do all the thinking, who anticipate every possible risk and who issue orders which the child obeys almost without question. Think of such mothers as "Dominant-overprotective Mothers." Such mothers produce completely pliant infants who may live through childhood or even reach adult years without ever growing up. These mothers hold onto their possessions by force.

The second form is represented by mothers who hold their possessions by bribery. They try to hold what they have by using "appeasement tactics." If you watch them, you feel that they are afraid that if they ever said "No" and stuck to it, the child might stop loving them and break away. The trouble is that appeasement only whets the appetite for more appeasement. The recipient never gets enough, no matter how fed up the rest of the world may become.

Think of such mothers as "Indulgent-overprotective Mothers." Children exposed to this type may literally rule the home. I do not need to describe them. You have seen too many and too much of them.

I do not know what actually determines the use of one or the other of these methods. Some women have been trained to get what they want by wheedling and petty bribery. Others have had an example of forceful dominance set up for them by their own mothers. Each seems to use her habitual tactics when she tries to hold onto her children. The final outcome is certainly determined by the balance between the make-up of the mother and the child. Some children are tough and cannot be dominated while others give in easily. In many cases the fight is never quite won by either side and the resultant mixture of indulgence and domination is much the most common picture. ~

Overpossessiveness is one of the risks which children must learn to face as they grow up. As adults, they will meet individuals who will try to dominate them or to conquer them by wheedling and petty bribery. Some experience with such methods in childhood can be of value in later life. Because both these methods are used so universally, such experience is almost inescapable. Difficulties arise when the dosage is regulated not by the child's needs but by the parent's feelings. Children of secure parents who have some interests and satisfactions outside the family circle are reasonably safe from overprotection. Children from families in which the parents are desper-

ately concerned with the actual practical struggle for existence, and also most children in very large families are reasonably well protected in this direction though they are sometimes exposed to the dangers of neglect and lack of supervision.

Trying to get extra satisfaction from children, trying to make them substitute for the shortcomings of the other parent, or trying to use them as symbols by means of which parents may relive parts of their own youth is actually only one side of the picture which is produced because children are human beings as well as possessions.

Unpleasant as the idea may be, children can be used for vengeance. All through human history there runs the idea that an image may be used as a means of tormenting or obtaining power over the original. Primitive men painted pictures of animals on the walls of caves and then threw spears at them so that the animals might be more easily killed during the hunt. We know that sorcerers made images and stuck them full of pins with the idea that they could injure the enemy of whom the model was made.

The mother of one of my patients saw her husband's image in her daughter's walk, in the tone of her voice, in the shape of her nose and the color of her hair. This woman hated her husband. Her daughter's life was made miserable. In her mother's eyes, the poor girl could never do anything right. This particular mother was relatively well aware of the reasons which made her daughter so annoying to her. The resemblance to the father was obvious and the

father's behavior had been so outrageous that he was a generally acceptable object for "righteous wrath." His wife could hate him, could tell everyone that she hated him, and everybody could agree that she was a good woman, sadly abused. She could hate him and she was not afraid of him, but she could never get at him. He just walked out of the picture. The poor child could not walk out. She had to stay at home and she served her mother as a constant reminder of the hated but unreachable husband. This is a simple example and the mother was a cruel person.

Sometimes the case is different. We usually fear and hate at the same time, and what we do depends on the balance of these two factors. If the fear is too great, we may not dare to show the hate, because, if we did, we might be made to suffer. Sometimes we do not dare to admit the hate even to ourselves. Just by way of illustration let me remind you of the popular idea that people, when they become mentally ill, turn against the very ones they seem to have loved most. As with so many popular beliefs, the observed facts are true and the underlying causes are misunderstood. When our patients show hatred of people they seem to have loved, we believe that they are simply giving expression to feelings which have always existed but which the patient has never dared to express or even admit to himself. The existence of such inadmissible and inexpressible feelings is often a major cause of mental illness.

Such hate becomes inadmissible and inexpressible because many people have been brought up to be-

lieve that it is very wrong indeed to experience a quite normal, occasional feeling of hate toward a mother or a brother or a husband. Such people can, for a time, hide the hate even from themselves. Hiding hate from oneself is an energy consuming and difficult process. Life is much easier if a safe and acceptable object of hatred can be discovered. Many people find a safe outlet in righteous wrath against alcohol or tobacco or heretics or the Democratic Party. When you see people with freely expressed and publicly flaunted "pet hates," it is always well to wonder about their unexpressed hates and fears.

If a child grows up in a home in which one or the other parent lives under such a fear-suppressed hate and if the child happens to have some resemblance in looks or voice or manner or name or just by association with the hated person, that child can become very annoying to the parent on the slightest provocation. The annoyance has little or nothing to do with the child's actual behavior. It represents inadmissible hate for some more dangerous person finding a safe way to blow off steam. This is another danger which children face because they are relatively defenseless possessions resembling other human beings. The existence of this danger is one of the reasons why early lessons in what to do about hate are valuable.

Hate may result in rejection. The rejected child is just not wanted. He is in the way. He is too much trouble. He costs money and he takes time and he always worries everybody. Nothing he does is ever right. This is rarely put into words or brought fully

into the awareness of the rejecting parent. It is expressed by parental irritability, strictness or nagging. Children are usually quite practical about punishment which follows obvious transgressions, but highly sensitive to discrimination or to seeming injustice. The difficulty in the case of rejection is that punishment does not follow obvious transgression. Nothing the child does is right. Long periods of "being good" produce no consistent rewards. "Being bad" does not make things worse. The world becomes very confusing. The child may either fight back, distrust everyone, hate the world and rely on himself alone, or he may give up, admit that he is ugly, awkward, stupid and mean and resign himself to life under those conditions, wondering why he happens to be so different. Neither road leads toward mental health.

As we discuss parental rejection, it seems to be one of the tragedies of childhood. It deprives the child of many of the advantages of family life. Before you become convinced parental rejection is, in all dosages, a destructive factor, remember that children must break their family ties before they can become adult. Mild doses of parental rejection provide the child with part of the incentive necessary to break these family ties. There are certainly other factors such as developing maturity and widening spheres of interest, but, in spite of these, home might remain too comfortable to leave if something did not arouse mild rejection on the part of the parents.

Fortunately, there are factors which produce these mild degrees of rejection even in the most con-

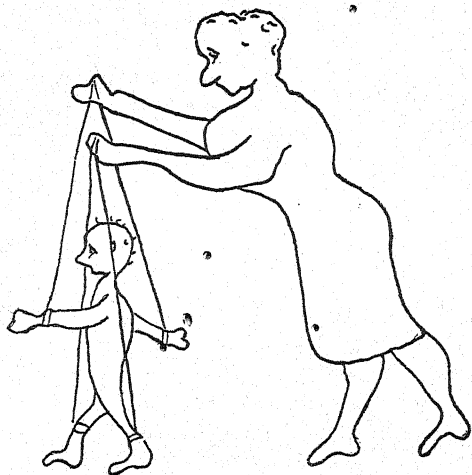
tented family. Every child is a nuisance sometimes. Children keep their mothers tied to the laundry tub or the stove, and they hold their father's nose to the grindstone. Honestly admitted, this nuisance value can be a great help. The pressure is supplied by parental irritation and balanced by parental love thus establishing one of the really wonderful automatic regulators of family life. If it is to operate, it requires the ability to admit the facts honestly and without shame.

We have discussed here a group of factors in family life which influence the mental health of children. Children must belong to someone if they are to be given the protection, love and care which starts them on the road. Because they do belong to human beings, these human beings tend to treat them as they treat other possessions. Children are, however, peculiar possessions. If you treat them properly, you lose them. This fact exposes children to danger in the hands of parents who can never dare to give up anything. In addition, children are human beings who can be used as models and substitutes with which to re-enact unsatisfied ambitions, unrequited loves, and inexpressible hates.

Opposing this need to hold onto children is the fact that children are nuisances. If they were unmixed pleasures, many of them would never be allowed to grow up. This is one of the fortunately balancing factors in the marvelously intricate structure which we call an "ordinary home." These forces counteract each other, at one time tending to hold us and at an-

other tending to drive us into the world. The final result depends on the balance. The balance is upset when one or the other parent is unable to face the fact that properly brought up children must be set free.

20876



IV

YOU LEARN ABOUT OBEDIENCE

ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE IS NO VIRTUE. OBEDIENCE IS a means to an end, never an end in itself. A completely obedient child might be an extra arm for its father or an extra pair of legs for its mother, but it would always be part of someone else, never an independent adult. As soon as orders and directions ceased, the child would fall in a helpless heap like a puppet with loose strings.

Children need to grow up in families and to belong to parents, but if they are to become happy and healthy adults, they must break out and break away.

Obedience is a bar to freedom. This does not mean that obedience can be abandoned or is not essential at certain times and under certain circumstances. The disobedient—both men and animals—die young, but too much obedience can be as destructive to mental health as disobedience is to life. Fortunately, there are opposing forces in the life of every child and these opposing forces tend to create a working balance. On one side stands the fact that disobedience and revolt against restraint are normal human qualities, and on the other, the fact that disobedient children are among the world's greatest living nuisances.

If you have watched children, it will not be necessary to convince you that mild resentment against authority and occasional disobedience are part of normal childhood. I do not mean that persistent disregard for all orders or violent revolt against any authority is average behavior. That is far from the truth. Such behavior is almost always the result of lessons in obedience poorly taught or poorly learned. In spite of this, there is evidence that resentment against being hampered or thwarted shows itself early in life.

I might mention one piece of evidence which tends to prove that obedience, in its broadest sense, is resented even by small babies. If you grab an infant by the head and hold it tight so it cannot move, you are almost certain to hear cries of rage. Being kept from doing something makes the infant angry. You do not need to hunt for evidence in regard to older children. Hold onto them to keep them from going

where they want, move things out of their reach, take things away and say, "You can't have that." Resentment, not placid obedience, is the ordinary result. Note here the transition between taking things away, restraint by superior force, and restraint by the commanding "No." Obedience begins as restraint and we resist restraint automatically.

What I wish to call to your attention is that disobedience is normal human equipment. This being the case, we must accept the fact that obedience is learned and must search for those factors in ordinary family life which teach this lesson. We must also watch for any factors which overemphasize or unduly prolong lessons in obedience because overobedience is a final block to the development of adult independence and thus threatens mental health.

Lessons in obedience are taught first as a matter of protection and are based on parental desires to shield children from harm. They begin with, "Don't do that. If you do, you will be hurt." Then you do, and are hurt. You learn the lesson a little step at a time and in a safe place. The fact that you learn it in a safe place is important because the lesson which must be learned is frequently painful. If comfort and security did not follow the pain, some of the natural desire to discover and experiment might be killed off and human progress might be slowed up. Nevertheless, the place in which the lesson is learned must not be too safe. The lesson is learned because disobedience hurts. It should be learned while the hurts are still small.

The lesson which begins, "Don't do that, you'll get hurt," changes to, "Don't do that because it worries your father, or your mother, or the neighbors."

When this change occurs, the first step away from obedience and toward independent responsibility has been taken. The family setting is ideally constructed to teach this lesson, and the lesson itself is one of the important ingredients of happy living. You must learn to consider other people if you are to live happily. Parents can avoid teaching this lesson only at the expense of their own comfort and the mental health of their children.

Some comments are necessary at once about this "Don't do that because it worries mother (or father)." That is the basis for learning a lesson but it is not the basis for a way of life. The grown man who does not do certain things "because that would worry mother" has failed to establish himself as an independent adult. It may be that he will not do certain things, but the reason should be within him and not hung on his mother. He should be able to do some things whether they worry her or not.

A few parents, both men and women, use "Don't worry me, I can't stand it" as a technique for controlling their families. Such people are not teaching lessons, they are defending themselves at the expense of the other members of the family, regardless of cost. They constitute a real mental hazard for children.

Now note something else. The two forces which provide for teaching obedience are among the most powerful which exist within the family circle. The

first lessons are based on the need to protect the child and are motivated by the parents' love for the child. The later lessons depend on parental self-protection, on the need for some periods of peace. As the child learns to protect himself from danger, the incentive for the first part of the lesson in obedience decreases. But, as the child's aggressiveness and strength increase, the parents' need for self-protection increases. Thus there arises a continuous need for control. What is actually necessary is a gradual transition from obedience to responsibility.

Let me illustrate the gradations of this change as it might take place in a fanciful case over a period of years. "Please go get me my slippers, they are under the bed upstairs in mother's room," changes slowly to "Please go upstairs and get my slippers," then to "Please get my slippers," and finally to "My feet are so tired." Through such a series you can see obedience, independent activity, responsibility, and a regard for the comfort of others developing around a very simple task. In the beginning it is all obedience, and in the end, all responsibility. Such mutually balancing forces tend to supply the child with a setting in which there is little likelihood that mentally healthy development will be hampered by overobedience.

Children who are ordered to pick up the chips to kindle the fire, carry in the water, drive in the cows, help with the milking, cut the wood, plow the field or tend the store learn invaluable lessons not only in obedience but also in responsibility and independence. Homes which do not provide the necessary equipment

for such training are seriously handicapped. The necessary graded and responsible jobs must be invented by ingenious parents.

Because the motives leading to demands for obedience so often overshadow the more important lessons in personal responsibility, we will, from this point on, talk about those situations within a home which may tend to overemphasize obedience and, in that way, to destroy independence.

The first of these is created by parents with insatiable appetites for respect. I use the word parents but there are also teachers who belong in this group. "I won't have any child talk back to me" is a fair sign of an insatiable appetite for respect. Too often that remark comes from people who have been pushed about by a hard fate which they themselves have always been afraid to "talk back to." For such people, children serve as excellent scapegoats for unconquerable destiny because they can be insulted and ordered around without fear of retaliation. Such people are not training children, they are gorging themselves on a satisfying diet.

This overappetite for obedience, when it is developed by one or the other parent, can certainly set the stage for overtraining. There are, however, still other elements in the child-parent relationship which overemphasize the virtues of obedience in parental eyes.

Children are possessions and, as possessions, are satisfying to parents. The more obedient they are, the greater the satisfaction becomes. This leads quite easily to overobedience because in such situations obe-

dience is taught for the satisfaction of the parent and not for the benefit of the child. The primary aim, ultimate independence for the child, is lost sight of.

Another item belongs in this same group. Little children tend to be more docile and easily controlled than grown children. As they grow, they become independent. Grown children are clear cut evidence of aging parents. Aging, even in minor degrees, is very difficult for some parents to face. If they can keep their children little, docile and obedient, the evidence of passing time is not so conspicuous. The result is little boys with long curls and big boys with short pants. It is also big girls with bows on their pigtails and nowhere else. As long as children obey, parents seem young and strong. Some day the children will look at their parents pityingly and go and do as they please. Then parents are old. Obedient children sustain wobbly parental self-respect, and because this is so, some insecure parents demand obedience long after it should have been replaced by responsibility.

It is all very well to talk of parents demanding obedience. Most parents will insist that the problem is to get anything that looks remotely like obedience from the present day child. It seems to me that part of this comes about because obedience is taught as obedience and not as protection from danger, and part because the average home has lost the machinery by which responsibility is made to take the place of obedience.

Such machinery is built into the cooperating family unit when the effort of each individual con-

tributes to the comfort and welfare of the whole. One of the really significant changes in family life has been the decreasing number of domestic jobs which need to be done if the family is to stay comfortable. This has not been true only of rural families but of city families as well. Many changes, changes such as gas and oil furnaces, the disappearance of coal grates and Franklin stoves, frequent store deliveries, the telephone, electric light, ready-prepared and packaged food even for pet dogs, have all tended to reduce home jobs for children. As these jobs have dropped out, training in responsibility has lagged and obedience, for the sake of domestic peace, has been demanded far beyond the period at which independent responsibility should have been substituted. The result has been demands for artificial obedience interpreted by the child as arbitrary restraint.

All we have said can be summed up in one simple statement. No child was ever disobedient in a vacuum. There must be a parent, a child and a situation. The immediate result depends on the balance between these three. The final result depends on endless repetitions of similar episodes so that behavior patterns are set up. It is obvious that inconsistency can prevent the formation of any stable patterns. It is equally obvious that there are differences between children and that no single prescription for obedience, applicable to all children, could be written even if that were desirable.

Disobedience is no bar to mental health. The disobedient child may have a much brighter outlook for

continuing mental health than the docile child who is wholly dependent on orders. The way we feel about orders, our attitude toward discipline and authority, rather than obedience or disobedience, is the factor which determines whether we can live happily with our fellow men. As in so many other characteristics about which we have been talking, this attitude toward authority is poisonous at both ends of the scale. Either complete submission at one end of the scale or unwavering antagonism at the other is a severe handicap to happy living. We look with contempt upon the man who always does what he is told, who never objects, who does not have spunk enough to take his own part. We label the people at the other end of the scale "anti-social" and lock them up.

We must all learn what to do about external authority. If we are to live with people, some general regulations and some limitations of personal activity are the necessary price of freedom. If we grow up with the feeling that all authority is arbitrary, cruel, and designed only to irritate us, we will live in continual conflict. On the other hand, if too many of us never learn independence and personal responsibility and grow up dependent on orders, we may become a race of slaves. The future of our country may depend on the way obedience and responsibility are taught at home.

We have been talking as if the ideal situation for a child would be one in which no conflict over authority ever existed, in which parents never lost their tempers, in which no child was ever unjustly pun-

ished, made a fool of or teased. Anybody with common sense knows that such a home would be very unlikely to produce comfortably average children. You may not have to eat your peck of dirt all at once, but a chance to get little tastes of what ordinary tough human beings are likely to do to you, particularly if you get those tastes while you are safely at home, undoubtedly helps you learn to take care of yourself. This applies not only to discipline and authority but also to the incidental frictions which arise when some one member of a family group feels and resents the restrictions placed upon his personal liberty by his responsibility to the group.

One of my friends told me a story which illustrates the idea that minor exposure to damaging situations may be important. He said that he grew up in a peaceful household. From his description, this household was peaceful far beyond any ordinary degree. He never heard his father and mother exchange a cross word. Even at the breakfast table they were always sweet and agreeable. From his present point of view as an adult with a wife and children of his own, he doubts if any human beings could actually have lived that way and he believes that there must have been some disagreements, some arguments, some fussing behind the closed doors when the children were excluded or asleep. The result was, nevertheless, that he grew up without ever having been exposed in the slightest degree to any sort of friction between married couples. When he found that he himself could not meet any such standard, he felt sure that

there must be something wrong with him. That made his life much more difficult. He now insists that his children, for their own good, will be exposed to small doses of family rowing, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Please do not jump to the conclusion that I am advising regular Saturday night slanging matches or dish-throwing contests. All that I mean is that there is value in the discovery that parents are human beings and that the world will not end when mother bursts into tears and father slams the door and stamps out. If the children see their father come back humbly with a bunch of flowers and their mother greet him somewhat shamefacedly with a very eager hug and kiss, they have probably had a valuable lesson.

Mind, I do not mean that this should happen every day or that it should be accompanied by sulking or recrimination. Very particularly I do not mean that the children should be drawn in to take sides or to act as peace emissaries. A poison which stimulates in small doses may be fatal in larger quantities. I know people who have grown up in the middle of constant parental quarreling, who have lived in dread of family fights, and who have acted as peacemakers before they could do long division. Some of these people live their lives with a horror of quarreling. Any disagreement, even one in which they have no legitimate part, sends them into spasms of apprehension. They will sacrifice almost any of their own interests for the sake of peace. Such people have been poisoned.

What we have said about quarreling is also true in regard to truthfulness. A patient once told me that

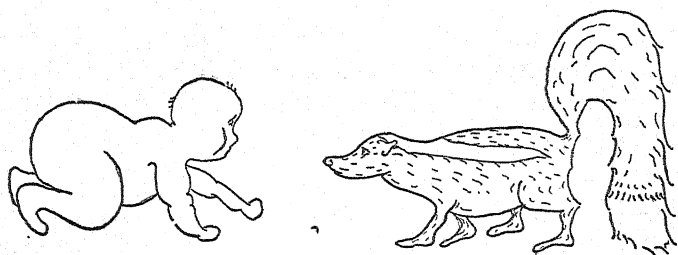
she could remember the first lie she had ever told. She was mentally ill. All children are born liars and must learn the virtues of truth. The thoroughly natural reply to "Did *you* break that window?" is "No, I didn't." It takes training to produce "Father, I cannot tell a lie." Here again the degree of exposure is important. We must learn to be truthful so that we can be trusted and can deal with other people. We all recognize that, but we also know we cannot live with people socially and tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Some of my patients stumble over this. They become so involved in the process of being sure to tell the exact truth that they never get the story told. An understanding of the differences between untruthfulness, legitimate error, and the necessary social amenities is part of the equipment for life. It is best acquired by contact with people who live honestly but comfortably.

We should go on and talk about vulgarity, obscenity, and profanity because they are components of ordinary living which must be met and coped with. In Chapter VII, we will talk about sex education, and in another place * I have presented some ideas as to belief in the magic quality of words. Here we will only mention the fact that many people as they talk use words which make a few other people uncomfortable. Granted that modern literature has made what was classed as vulgarity and obscenity common property, and granted that large schools

* *Psychiatry for the Curious*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1940.

filled with children from all walks of life have helped in the same direction, it is still true that many children grow up in homes in which the pronunciation of a vulgar word produces a major convulsion. I am not advocating a waterfront vocabulary for use in the home. I am advocating desensitization to the magic, alluring quality of forbidden words because we think with word symbols and nothing should be permitted to make thinking any more difficult than it already is. It took me a year to teach one of my patients to even whisper "Go to Hell." He needed to think that way about certain situations in his life.

Remember, children will live their lives neither with Saints nor Devils. If they grow up with parents who are human beings, they may become more or less immune to many of the vagaries of ordinary human beings. Certainly, the more they learn about ordinary humans, the better they will understand them and the more comfortable their relations with their group will be. The more comfortable any of us are with our group, the better chance we have for mental health.



V

YOU LEARN WHAT TO EXPECT

YOU LEARN YOUR MOTHER TONGUE. CERTAIN SOUNDS begin to stand for certain things. Water or some sound that gradually changes into the adult word, water, comes to stand for a certain substance as do words such as table, chair, doll, and a lot of others. This may seem simple, but actually it is one of the most complicated lessons. If you only learned that a certain sound stood for a certain thing, it would be simple, but you actually learn a great deal more. You learn about the quality, character, use, danger, and moral value of the "thing" that the sound stands for and all this is an essential part of your mother tongue. Much of your future outlook on the world, and some of your happiness and mental health, depends on the meanings you learn; and yet the lesson begins very simply.

Say to a small child, "What is water?" The commonest answer will be, "To drink." Ask, "What is a

table?" Your answer is most likely to be, "To eat off." A chair to sit on, a doll to play with, a ball to throw. These are definitions "in terms of use." The small child will not tell you that a chair is something made of wood and has four legs. That comes later. The thing, its use, and the word that stands both for the thing and its use start out as a unit. The term "use" must be employed liberally because sometimes in response to such a question as, "What is a cat?" the reply will be, "It scratches." "A match?" "It burns." Such definitions may be more important than simple use definitions because they tend to teach us what sort of behavior to expect from the things we meet as we live.

Whether a cat is first thought of as "It scratches" or "It purrs" may be an accident or the result of some particular mother's feeling about cats. By itself, this would, of course, make no difference; but suppose a child learns "gun" as "To shoot you" or "strap," "To beat you," or "policeman," "He chases you." Multiply this by the countless number of things and classes of people and situations about which the child must learn, and it is easy to see that the mother tongue may have a large share in setting up the meaning of the world for the child.

We could take an even simpler example. Suppose that knife is "To eat with" for one child and "To cut meat with" for another. There is certainly nothing immoral about sticking your knife in your mouth and licking it clean; and yet in our present social organization, it would make contacts with certain fairly

large groups rather awkward. I do not want to give the impression that a knife swallower is any less virtuous or less intelligent than a follower of the book of etiquette. All that I mean is that today, in this country, his definition of knife as "To eat with" handicaps him. The important points in that last sentence are "today" and "in this country." A very careful book of table etiquette written to guide the behavior of gentlemen about three hundred years ago, advises that you should not dip your hand into the common bowl above the wrist and that when you throw bones to the dogs, you should drop them on the floor beside your chair and not cast them across the table. That book is out of print today.

Fortunately for mental health, the present-day family setting, with its wide contacts and rapid means of communication, tends to supply the mother with a fairly standard set of meanings. I am not arguing for the correctness or for the virtue of these meanings. What is important is that the child has a chance to learn meanings that are likewise understood by the group with which he will live. These his mother teaches him because she has lived in the world and has learned what words and things signify for her group. If her group has been fairly large, if she has acquired an education, if she has looked and listened, she will have developed a set of meanings which are not too different from those of the people around her. These meanings have helped her to live and to understand. These she passes on to her children automatically as she talks to them, cares for them, and

directs them. Her children acquire a mother tongue useful in their own community.

Of course, if the mother has lived in a very isolated group, if she has been limited in her education, her reading, her looking, and her listening, or if her experience with certain "things" has been very bitter or painful, she may give her child a sadly twisted set of values. If, in addition, the child's contacts outside his mother's circle have been severely limited, he may start with a handicap. He will have to unlearn much of his mother tongue before he can live happily.

The story of a family of patients illustrates this. The mother was born and grew up in a small Russian village in which hers was one of seven Jewish families. The family was poor, they worked hard and had been persecuted but had survived for many generations. Because she was a woman, the mother of this family had no opportunity to learn to read or write. She came to this country ignorant, illiterate but intelligent. She then married as soon as possible because, if she married, she would have to cook her husband's meals; and, if she cooked, there would be something for her to eat. The husband was a weakling, but this woman was dominant. She brought with her the "meanings of things" which had developed in her family through generations of living in a Russian village. She prospered here but, possibly because she remained illiterate, she was slow to acquire new meanings. Her oldest daughter is in a State Hospital and her son is in a penal institution. The two younger daughters are "nervous," but they make their living

as working women. Is it not possible that two children learned "meanings" which were suitable only for a Russian village and the next two, growing up after their mother was more firmly transplanted, learned "meanings" which made it somewhat easier for them to live in present-day America?

The much discussed and considerably maligned movies and radio tend to counteract familial isolation. No one can deny that these modern additions to family life present certain dangers, but in the light of what we have just been talking about, I would like to call your attention to one of their advantages. If your mother has a lot of queer ideas, you can hardly avoid finding out from the radio, the funnies, and the movies that many other people do not agree with her and that part of the world thinks her ideas are jokes. A discovery of that sort may not add to domestic harmony and may break down parental authority, but it certainly tends to prevent the building up of isolated and peculiar family attitudes. Those of us who have watched the effects of some dominant and eccentric progenitor handing down attitudes, standards, and ways of living along with the coupon bonds through two or three generations cannot help believing that anything which tends to break such a chain is of positive mental health value. To this extent our modern means of spreading information are valuable in a world so full of new ideas that only the wisest and best informed parents are able to give their children a set of meanings adjusted to happy living.

Please remember that we are not talking about

the goodness or badness or rightness or wrongness of ideas. All that is important for our present discussion is that if a child's understanding of the meaning of things is not too different from that of the rest of the world, it will be easier for him to understand people. He may not become a genius, a saint, a millionaire, or a conspicuous sinner ; but if he understands people, he will have a better chance for mental health.

We have been talking about the meaning of *things*. Even more important is the meaning of situations. From the psychiatric point of view, one of the real difficulties is that you cannot tell what any particular situation may mean to any particular individual unless you know all about him. Let me illustrate. Once I was sitting in my office looking out of the window and waiting for an eight-year-old boy to come to see me. He came slowly, by himself, down the other side of the street. About a half a square from the office he stopped, leaned over, picked a cigarette butt out of the gutter, dug a match out of his pocket, lighted the butt and walked along puffing. What this behavior would have meant to his Sunday School teacher or his mother, I can only guess. Fortunately, the boy and I had talked quite a lot. To me the behavior said, "I'm a big grown man. Look, I even smoke cigarettes." Somewhere, for that boy, smoking cigarettes had come to mean "being big." His mother tongue was twisted.

Another story helps to illustrate how uncertain your judgment may be as to the meaning of things. Once I was in charge of a group of mentally defective

children. In the group there was an attractive, gay little fellow who, in spite of his bright appearance and rather fluent talk, did not have comprehension much above that of a small child. He could not be made to understand that running out on the highway was dangerous. In a last desperate effort to impress this lesson, I fastened a long rope to his belt and tied the other end to a tree. About twenty minutes later I heard, "Look, Doctor! Look, Doctor!" He was calling me in high glee. He had untied himself from my tree and tied himself up to a tree of his own choice. It was a game for him. I failed because I did not know what being tied to a tree would mean to him.

Sometimes it is very difficult to discover the meaning of situations. The very brilliant eight-year-old daughter of a friend of mine did not learn to read. She could do anything else in school, and we all thought that there was something strange about this failure to read. Presently the story came out. Her father was going to night school. Every night at home the same story was repeated. The mother would say, "Can't we go somewhere and have some fun tonight?" The father always replied, "No, I have to *read* my lesson for tomorrow." To this little girl "to read" meant to stay at home all the time, never to have any fun. She was not going to do that to herself. She never let us find out that she could already read perfectly. When, with a little explanation, the meaning of the situation changed for her, her behavior changed also.

You can go on through the entire range of ordi-

nary human activity and notice that the meaning of situations, meanings learned as the mother tongue is learned, may influence a way of life. Think of debts and the differences in the way people feel about owing money. Ideas about unpaid bills vary from complete casual indifference to discomfort and shame almost equal to an attack of itch. Your feeling about debt may even influence your party politics in spite of the fact that your mother's feelings about the mortgage on the old homestead can form no sound basis for an opinion as to the national debt.

Think of such other matters as gambling, being a gentleman, acting like a lady, table manners, the advantage of a college education, the dignity of labor, feelings about foreigners, taxes, the kind of food that is good to eat, almost all ordinary, simple human situations; and notice the extent to which family standards, the meaning of words and the things they stand for, are influenced by what is learned as we learn to talk at home.

One of my friends tells me that, as he grew up, he learned that waste of water was wicked. He had grown up where all the water was pumped or carried by hand. This lesson was taught him over and over again. Now, if he goes into a public washroom and sees someone letting the water run and run instead of filling the basin and washing with a moderate amount of water, it gives him an emotional feeling close to anger. If this free use of water is followed by the use of five or six unnecessary paper towels, the feeling is intensified to an uncomfortable degree. My own idea

about this is that running water is much cleaner than the usual wash bowl. For one of us, waste, and for the other, dirt, is the deciding factor. Another friend feels the same way about lights left burning in empty rooms. Still another has a feeling that being late and keeping someone else waiting is just not proper behavior. As a result, he says he has wasted many and many an hour by getting to appointments fifteen minutes too soon and waiting twenty minutes after the appointed hour for the other person to come. This is certainly no great virtue, and it makes life more difficult for him because he is always annoyed by the time the expected person arrives. He could live a little more happily if he had not learned this lesson quite so well. If you think about yourself, you will find that some lessons have been disadvantageous and others helpful.

Your religion also rests very largely on meanings you learned at home. Your father and mother might have been Buddhists or Mohammedans. What would your cross and your saints and your elders and your catechism mean to you then? Your entire set of religious realities, your symbols, your code of morals, your marriage customs, and even your tombstones would change their meaning. Religion, or the lack of it, is one of the primary aspects of this very broad mother tongue which we are discussing. Learn a different language of meaning when you are little and at home, and the world you believe you know today will certainly seem a different place.

Please remember that we are not talking about

goodness or badness, nor about truth, rightness, error, or sin. These are not psychiatric factors. All that needs to be pointed out is that many of our feelings and beliefs stand on the basis of what our parents felt and believed and then taught us.

The mother tongue is learned at home. We have talked about it as "mother" tongue but, of course, it is father tongue, too. The mother tongue was learned by the mother from two parents, and the father tongue from two entirely different people. Go back a few generations, and you will probably find a few ministers of the gospel and a few horse thieves, possibly not in the direct name line, but somewhere in the bushes round about. The result is that what we learn as to the meaning of things is drawn from a fairly wide cross section of the community and, under ordinary conditions, will not vary greatly from that which the neighborhood children learn. Some people tend to worry about poor heredity, about certain "bad strains" being passed down in families and concentrated by inbreeding. As I have said before, peculiar ideas or twisted meanings passed down in families can be just as damaging as heredity. Fortunately for all of us, our ideas dilute more easily than our physical inheritance. Also, every contact we are allowed to make outside the home helps with this dilution so that very soon what we believe and feel comes to be approximately what the group we live with believes and feels.

This commonness of belief is a major protective factor. The laws and the customs of the group are the

fixed forms of what the ordinary individual in the group feels to be right, just, and proper. The nearer these group customs and beliefs come to be our customs and beliefs, the more we are like the group, inside and out, the easier it is for us to live happily, productively, and without being a nuisance to the group. Again, I must remind you that we are not talking about becoming leaders or geniuses or about making progress.

We have discussed the meaning of things and the meaning of situations. Much more important than either of these, for mental health, is the meaning, the significance of people. Let me illustrate. I walked into a little family-operated store on the river bank. There was a baby in a crib, covered about equally with mosquito netting and flies, a mother in a rocking chair and a four-year-old trying to slide back the front of the candy case. The mother yelled at the four-year-old, "Stop it; here comes the doctor. Do you want me to call him to see you and stick a needle in you?" The four-year-old screamed and dived through the curtain into the back room. All I wanted was a pack of cigarettes. That youngster was learning about doctors. They were dangerous and did things that hurt. Such ideas will not make the child's life any easier and, in adult life, may make the difference between prompt medical attention and the somewhat less prompt but more final attention of the undertaker. This example by itself may have no direct bearing on the mental health of the four-year-old we were talking about. Similarly twisted attitudes toward lawyers,

ministers, policemen, judges, bill collectors, junk men, cross-eyed beggars, gypsies, Catholics, Presbyterians, Jews, or any one of the vast number of labeled classes we must all meet in day-by-day living may make contacts with people much more difficult. *Any* factor that tends to make ordinary inter-personal relations more difficult is a potential producer of mental illness.

There is one aspect of the mother tongue which is important, and bears directly on the next problem we must discuss. A child does something wrong. The mother scolds. The child asks how the mother found out. The mother says, "Never mind how, a little bird told me." A child asks why he can't do something and is told, "Mother knows best." Parents very often give the impression that they know everything, are "all wise." "My daddy told me so" is final authority for fact. If the information which follows a child's eternal "Why?" is sound, it forms the basis for sane living; but it also builds up a firm belief in the wisdom of parents. This gives parents a dangerous power.

If you believe that your father knows everything and is always right, then if he says, "You're a fool," you *are* a fool and no question about it. If one of your parents says you are slow or dumb or ugly or clumsy or bad and repeats it, you believe it because you believe the other things your parents have said. Children learn to estimate their own value in the world from the opinions of their parents.

This business of what *you* mean to *you* is one of the vital factors in mental health. If you feel that you are not too different from the rest of us, if you feel

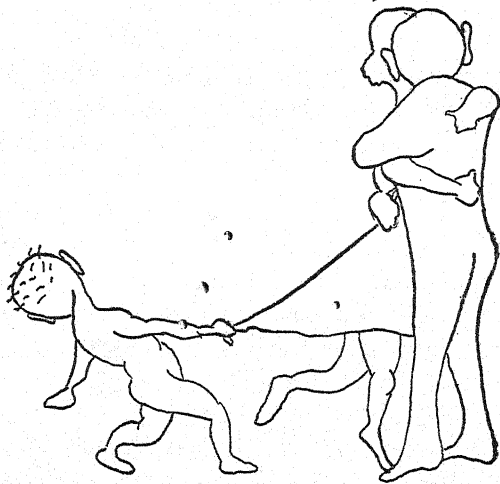
that you can hold your own in ordinary company, if you do not feel that people are always looking down on you or making fun of you, then living with groups of people is likely to be a comfortable and happy experience. What *you* mean to *you* is learned, in part at least, from your parents. It is part of your mother tongue.

Even in this matter of parental omniscience there are balancing factors. Parents do make mistakes and are sometimes big enough to admit them. When that happens, children discover their parents are human, not gods, and that some wisdom does exist outside the home. This tends to counteract isolated, peculiar, familial attitudes and to provide children with standards of comparison and foundation for judgment. Added to this is the entire force of education insofar as education provides an understanding of what other men in other times have believed. When these balancing factors are put out of operation by overdominant parents, by too great restriction of contacts, or by extreme personal sensitiveness which makes any contact with other humans difficult, children may grow up with a handicap which makes living difficult.

Please remember that this failure to learn the ordinary attitudes toward things, situations, and people, is just one item in a long series. Some differences always exist between person and person, and it is these which give individuals the different flavors which go to make up what we call personality. Even fairly marked differences may, by themselves, be as-

sets, may serve to make the individual more interesting and more attractive. It is only when marked differences in the mother tongue are added to marked difficulties in other fields that we see individuals for whom the ordinary problems of living become complicated enough to reach the danger point.

All of us know the expression, "He doesn't speak my language." It may be slang, but it expresses a mental hygiene principle. If "He doesn't speak my language," things do not mean to him what they mean to me; his standards are not my standards; I don't understand him and I don't like him. If I don't speak the language of my community, I am isolated, unhappy, and I may some day be mentally ill.



VI

YOU LEARN ABOUT PEOPLE

YOU LEARN ABOUT WOMEN FROM MOTHER. YOU learn about men from her too (particularly if you are a girl). Learning what to do about women is half of the most important mental health lesson. The other half is learning what to do about men. If you learn how to live and work easily and happily with men and women without feeling that you are too different, without being panicked by fear of their criticism, without an insatiable appetite for their praise or their affection, without the need to dominate and get

ahead of everyone who comes near you, or without finding your chief satisfaction in the martyrdom of letting everyone impose on you and rub the impositions in, then you have mastered one major technique of mental health.

You begin to learn these lessons at home and you begin to learn them early. Think of the setting. Very, very early in your life you need food and are uncomfortable because you need it. Your mother feeds you and begins to set up a pattern. You hurt yourself. She kisses you and "makes it well" and the pattern is reinforced. Someone threatens you, and you run and hide behind your mother's skirts. Is it any wonder that some men always wish for "biscuits like mother used to make" or for girls just like the "girl who married dear old dad," much to the discomfort of their wives who can never do as much for their "grownup babies" as "Mother" did for her little ones?

That is part of the pattern. If boys or girls learn to expect completely protective behavior from every woman they will never grow up. We have already talked about maternal overprotection, both its causes and its results. Fortunately, another pattern almost always develops in the relations between the mother and the infant because the mother is not only the first comforter, but also the first "depriver" and the first enforcer of socializing laws. She refuses to feed you, she makes you drink from a cup, she insists that you learn toilet habits, and almost always, at some time in your life, she shifts the major portion of her attention to some other human being who becomes your

natural rival. Psychiatrists have learned that the resentments which arise when a mother ceases to be all-providing and all-protecting may warp the individual's contacts with the adult world if these deprivations are not compensated for by satisfaction in new achievements, by praise for new accomplishment, and by a continued sense of security in the mother's affection.

The important part which these maternal regulations and deprivations play in helping the infant to break loose from completely comfortable and satisfying dependence on his mother is often overlooked. Such a break must be made. Weaning and training are the natural incentives which force a child to take the first steps away from its mother and toward adult independence. On the other hand, if this pattern of giving something and then taking it away, of being all-providing and all-comforting and then suddenly indifferent and unyielding, is repeated too often, varied too frequently, or enforced too harshly, some individuals grow up with an idea of mothers and women as fickle temptresses who, the minute you admit you like something, will snatch it away. A few men feel that way about women. Many women trust no other women. It is the early childhood dosage which is important. Both protection and rejection are necessary for development, but both overprotection and overrejection are damaging. You must be given immunizing and not poisonous doses.

Enforcement of social regulations by mothers, beginning with toilet habits, and including the orders

to cover your nakedness as if there were something shameful about your body, to wash ears, brush hair, learn table manners and talk politely, builds up a general attitude toward all women. We learn to feel that women just naturally know the difference between clean and dirty, are "clean," and against anything "dirty" or "wrong." Women probably are not natively any cleaner or more against dirt than men, but mothers have always taught children what was "right" or "wrong" or "clean" or "dirty," so that daughters and sons look for the familiar pattern in all women. As a result, there is a widespread belief that women are "clean" and "good." I do not deny that a few are, that some feel that they are, and that some believe that it is necessary to pretend to be. The important point is that a firm belief, learned at your mother's knee, that all women are saintly pure and superhumanly good, sets an unreasonably high standard for most daughters, and may make the lives of some sons quite lonely. Human mothers are much more useful than saints, even if they lose their tempers and slap you over once in a while.

So far, we have been talking about mothers and the way in which their sons and daughters learn about women from them. There are, however, fathers in homes, and the sons and daughters learn about men from them. We can begin with some general factors, and then we will have to consider sons and daughters separately because the father has a very different significance for his sons and for his daughters.

Aside from the intimate relationship of affection,

praise and protection, the father serves as a not quite so intimate source of final authority and justice, more like a policeman or God. This authority has little to do with keeping clean or learning to eat, or such personal matters. It relates more to such things as being kind to little brothers and sisters, disobeying mother, fighting in the neighborhood, breaking things, or maybe lying or taking what does not belong to us. It seems as if the lessons we learned from our mothers, early and almost without knowing we were learning, worked their way inside us and became "conscience," part of ourselves, and that what our fathers enforced became more like our respect for the Constitution or possibly the Catechism. In this relationship with fathers, children learn more about "men's institutions," or the "rules of the game," than about men. It is here that we form many of our general feelings toward "the law," government, the foreman, boss, principal, president of the board of managers for whom we work. I cannot resist reintroducing one of my patients about whom I talked in another place. He taught me this lesson vividly. He was an alcoholic. Why he was an alcoholic is another story. When he got drunk enough, he tried to choke policemen. He spread out his long, thin fingers and reached for me as he said, "I just like to get a hold around his windpipe and shut down." He was almost too graphic. Then he talked about his father, a big man, a hard man, and to the boy, an unjust man. He punished cruelly and without bothering about the facts. He was brutal to my patient's mother and my patient hated

him but feared him more than he hated. When he grew up and got drunk, my patient tried to choke the nearest representative of authority.

Boys and girls both acquire some of their attitude toward authority from their fathers. Both also acquire part of their attitude about the position a man should occupy in the family, about how a man should treat and be treated by his wife and other women, from the same source. This is so generally accepted that we talk glibly about the way Frenchmen or Englishmen or Germans or Americans treat their wives as if this had something to do with the mythical racial qualities of men. Obviously, it is a social pattern which boys practice and girls submit to because they learned it at home and because "that's the way to do."

Here it might be well to note something else. Children learn these behavior patterns at home. After they have learned them at home they grow up and have families of their own. If they have been fairly comfortable and nothing else has interfered, they use these same patterns in relation to their own wives and children. If, however, something has happened to make them dissatisfied with themselves or resentful of their own childhood experiences, they may reject their early lessons and practice the exact reverse, often without any thought as to which procedure would be more useful for their own children. Anyone who tries to change the behavior patterns in a home must bear this in mind. What the father does or what the mother does may have much less relation to what their children need than to how the father or mother

feels about their own parents. Because such behavior has little to do with what is actually going on at the moment, it is not easily changed by pointing out its unsuitability. "My mother (or my father) did it to me" is a very powerful reason which often leads to very poor results.

Aside from serving as a basis for understanding external authority and as a model for future domestic relations, the father plays another important role. On this role depends much of the child's future ability to move out of the family circle, to make friends, and ultimately, to meet other adults, fall in love, and carry on.

We must now consider the boy and the girl in the home separately although they both start from the same point, that is, from complete attachment to the mother and complete dependence on her. The father enters the picture as a rival. Both the boy and the girl compete with him for the mother's time, attention, and affection. He is a rival who is loved, who can be kind, helpful, and affectionate, but, nevertheless, he is a rival. He takes some of your mother's attention, he takes some of her affection, he can take her away from you, can put you out of her room and her bed and take her room and her bed for himself. He has, however, one other outstanding characteristic. He is an invincible rival. Your smaller brother or sister and your older brother or sister are also rivals for the attention of both parents, but they are rivals whom you can resist, with whom you can contend and fight at least with some faint hope of getting even by trickery

if not by force. Your father is unbeatable, all-powerful and all-wise. Beside that, it is "wrong" to fight him, not to love him all the time, even to think of wishing that something would happen to him to put him out of the way. You probably feel that if he ever found out that you had any such idea, he would destroy you. If you are a boy this puts you in a difficult position.

A great deal of psychiatric theory is wound around this rivalry between the son and the father for the affection of the mother. Psychiatrists usually refer to this as the Oedipus Situation. It is possible that there is some early sexual coloring to this rivalry between the son and the father, and the boy probably has a very vague fear that his father might injure him. The mechanics and the particular form of this fear are important to the psychiatrist as he treats his patient. For those of us who are interested in keeping children mentally healthy, the important factors are that the son and the father are rivals for the mother's attention, that the father is a rival who cannot be conquered by force or trickery, that the situation may be very painful and that the boy must do something about it. These facts need not be covered up with complicated theory. Put them this way. "Somebody has given me everything I want." "Somebody else, who is like me physically, threatens to take away part of what I have." "This somebody is unbeatable." "What shall I do?"

At this point we have to remember that one of the child's very valuable assets is that he can "pre-

tend" or imagine that he is a locomotive or a battleship or a knight in full armor. This ability is useful on many occasions but particularly so just at this point. The boy can pretend that he is grown up, that he is a man, that he is like his father or that he is his father. Psychiatrists call this identification with father in an attempt to solve the Oedipus situation. If the father can accept these attempts to be like him without ridicule, with encouragement and kindness, and if the father, by his behavior, sets up an example which can be safely followed, then these attempts on the part of the son can lead the son to become his father's pal, can set the father up as the son's ideal hero, can lead to other ideal figures outside the home, and can finally become one factor in establishing a comfortable relationship with men and women in adult life.

What is significant to me is the "usefulness" of this chain of events. The infant is dependent on his mother and entirely satisfied with that situation. He is forced out of this complete content, which he must give up if he is ever to become an independent adult, by a rival whom he cannot attack. He uses one of the powers he already has. He "identifies" himself with his rival, pretends he is his rival, imitates him, adopts him as a pal, uses the pal as a model for heroes outside his home circle, and then in the end is able to take on adult relationships. Things may happen to break this chain of events. When they do, the adult personality is more or less damaged.

Of course, while this change in relationship with the father is going on, a change in the relationship

with the mother takes place. If she turns the boy loose without too much struggle, he follows his father, the other boys, and, ultimately, the other men. With them he passes through complete disinterest and contempt for girls, and by way of an increasing interest, to love and attempted sex adjustment. Solution of the rivalry with his father does not guarantee that the son can take these steps easily or that he can take them at all; but without solution they are almost impossible.

So far, we have been talking about boys. Now we must talk of the girl and the steps by which she learns about people so that she can finally take her place in the adult world. She starts from the same point of complete dependence on her mother and complete satisfaction with this dependence. Again, just as in the case of the boy, the father comes in as a rival who can demand and hold some of the mother's affection and attention. He is a rival who is both loved and resented but who is too powerful to be attacked.

At this point the girl suffers from a greater disadvantage than the boy. She is not able to identify herself with her father because she is too well aware of her "differences." There is evidence in everyday experience that many small girls do try to use identification as a way of solving their problem. Many girls pass through a tomboy stage during which they make every effort to be boys and to become their fathers' masculine pals. The small daughter of one of my friends expressed her situation very clearly when she was asked by her parents why she had given up a

certain activity. She said, "Oh, I have outgrown my boyhood." A few women manage to carry their "boyhood" over into adult life, and when they do, we see sick masculine women.

Usually, when identification with the father does not work, girls use their natural weapon, their femininity, to capture their fathers' attention, thus making up for part of their mothers' attention and affection which they feel they have lost. This attack on the father is made easier because he is almost always presensitized to feminine attractions but the attack is a delicate matter because it exposes the girl to two dangers. The first of these dangers is the father. He may be very flattered by his small daughter's attention, and he may respond by holding too tight. If the father does hold the girl's interest completely, her attachment to him, which should be simply a stepping-stone to other interests, may become for the girl, a goal in itself. There are many "June and December" marriages which become clearer when we know how the bride felt about her father.

The second danger to which the girl is exposed is her mother. She is the one who must teach the girl to use feminine charms; but, as she does this, she trains a rival whom time will make more powerful as the teacher grows weaker. The mother, to save herself, must make it easy for the girl to use these feminine tactics to attract attention from males outside the family circle. This places the mother in a difficult and self-effacing role. It is hard for certain mothers to

carry it out comfortably, naturally, and almost unconsciously.

For the girl, as for the boy, the need to do something about the father as a rival supplies the incentive by which relationships outside the home are established.

The girl starts completely attached to her mother, the father makes demands for part of the mother's attention and thus becomes his daughter's rival, the daughter makes up to herself for this loss by attracting part of her father's attention, and then uses her increasing interest in her father as a stepping-stone to interest in other men. This is the usual method, and it is usually successful.

One comment is necessary; the boy, when he "identifies" himself with his father, tends to solve the problem of having a rival. His method of solving rivalry by identification is not too complicated. In the first place, identification in itself gives satisfaction. What the father does, his bigness, his bravery, his smartness, belongs in part to the boy who has identified himself with his father. He can then brag about his father with almost as pleasurable results as if he bragged about himself. This tends to make up for the loss of some of the mother's attention. In the second place, identification reduces the fear of the father and helps the boy to feel safer in that part of the mother's affection which he is able to hold. The father and the son can thus become comfortable associates, respecting each other's rights.

The daughter, on the other hand, when she at-

tracts part of her father's attention, leaves her mother as a potentially permanent rival. Her problem is not solved at this point; it is only shifted. To solve it she must now identify herself with her mother, but even this does not solve the problem completely. The mother has been the original source of complete satisfaction and dependence. If the girl tries to *be* her mother, she also has to try to *be* a source of satisfaction, comfort and dependence. Watch a little girl doing just that with her doll babies. When she identifies herself with her mother she has not solved her problem, she has only taken on new duties, responsibilities and desires. Her mother still remains a potential rival.

The final result depends on the mother. If she is sure enough of herself, she can share a little of her husband with her daughter for a time. If she, herself, has had happiness, she will not see her daughter's happiness as something which she never had, which she resents never having had, and of which she is jealous without being able to admit this jealousy even to herself. If she is able to share attention with her daughter freely and without envy, she can help her daughter to become a woman, and by helping her, hold her affection. If she does not help the daughter to build up interests outside the home, then the rivalry within the home must continue. Some mothers cannot even let their daughters have husbands of their own in peace. Psychiatrists certainly see many women who, when they become patients, discover deep resentments against their mothers. There is some rivalry between all women which has its basis

in the unsolved rivalry between mothers and daughters.

We have discussed the natural process by which boys and girls are forced to give up the ideal situation of being completely cared for by their mothers. It is essential that these steps be taken if a child is to become an adult. The steps are part of the bigger job of learning about people, and are part of the experience in living which the home must provide if the balance of mental health is to be maintained.



VII

YOU LEARN ABOUT SEX

PEOPLE OCCUR IN TWO SEXES. YOU BELONG TO ONE or the other and, if you are to live happily, you must learn about both, and about their relation to each other. These relations are complex, but if we consider certain aspects separately and if we study those elements in ordinary family living which provide a natural source of guidance, the picture becomes simpler.

On the one hand there are the biological aspects of sex relationships which lead to reproduction. On the other there are the restrictions which society has placed about any action even remotely connected with the sex field. Satisfactory sex education includes not only an understanding of both but also the all-

important ability to work out a compromise between biological urges and social restrictions.

It is obvious that sex activity unrestrained by social custom leads to disaster in most cultures, but we must never forget that overrestraint by social custom, backed up as it is by powerful feelings of evil and guilt and contamination, frequently makes comfortable biological functioning impossible. A compromise is necessary, and this compromise might not be so difficult if it could be made once and then let stand for life. That just will not work. Modesty, restraint, and saintly purity may be very becoming to a sixteen-year-old girl. These same traits, admired as they are at sixteen, can make life hideous for both marriage partners at twenty-two. The compromise between biological urges and social restrictions must develop continuously.

You teach a child to eat with a spoon as one step in a process which will ultimately lead to the selection of the right fork at the banquet given in his honor when he is elected president. If you taught him that a spoon was the only possible tool and that any faint desire to use any other was wicked, he would certainly be uncomfortable when the banquet was spread before him. The same is true of sex education. The first lessons in control must be taught as part of a process leading to further development and not with force and finality. What is suitable at six should be outgrown at twelve. What is becoming and useful at sixteen may be a stumbling block at twenty-five.

The process must go on till the final lessons are learned.

In a home in which healthy parents work together for their mutual happiness and for the happiness of their children, the necessary lessons are learned by the children as they live. The essential elements are "built into the home." When some unusual circumstance places particular stress in one direction or another, the balance may tip.

What I want to do now is to point out those factors in ordinary living which tend to provide the necessary guidance almost automatically and then to discuss those situations which may interfere with orderly development.

We will begin with the simple biological education. Remember that children occur in families and are supposed to grow up in families. Think of a child who grew up in the simplest type of family organization. The family lived together in one or two rooms. When they bathed, if they did, they bathed, one after the other, in a tub in front of the only fire in the house. The addition of a heifer calf or a new litter of pigs was an eagerly awaited event of major financial importance to the entire family. New babies arrived periodically and cast the shadow of their expected arrival across the family scene months in advance. The ordinary biological functions of men and animals were public property. Sex was not taught, it was lived. Each child absorbed that part which was significant to him at his particular stage of development.

He learned one lesson today and another tomorrow or next week or next month as his interest happened to arise. To talk about the need of teaching children in such families the biology of sex is pure nonsense.

Now think of an only child growing up in an apartment equipped with a single goldfish and a fern. He may live for a number of years in a completely de-sexualized atmosphere and may only discover, quite suddenly, how ignorant he is when he meets some of his more fortunate neighbors. If the child happens to be a girl and the mother, because of the way her mother trained her, happens to be a prude, the situation can continue for many years and become tragic. Here the need for simple biological information is obvious. Such prolonged periods of ignorance can give rise to a whole range of fantastic ideas as to sexual physiology, ideas which may be extremely disconcerting to the adolescent or young adult. As a matter of fact, the refinements of modern civilization do make the most extraordinary grade of ignorance possible even for adults, both men and women. Obviously such people have been deprived of essential ingredients of family life as flour is deprived of its vitamins by too fine milling. For them the vitamins must be added artificially.

The simple family setting which we talked about supplied information in graduated doses. The complete lesson was spread out openly at all times but the dosage was regulated by the interest of the child. What interested him, he saw. What did not interest him at any particular moment, he neglected. That

principle is probably the best guide when supplementary instruction is needed.

The actual teaching of the lessons depends on how well the lessons have been learned by the teachers. This is intimately related to the attitudes about sex and sex education which parents have learned from their parents. One fact must never be lost sight of. Even in the presence of the simplest lessons spread out widely, the child may see only distortion if parental attitudes demand blinders and label natural inquisitiveness original sin. In order to picture the importance of such attitudes we must consider the second part of the general sex lesson, the part which has to do with social restrictions.

The social restrictions which man has built up around sex activity are so complex and vary so widely from culture to culture that discussions of social sex education are futile, for any immediate practical purpose, unless they are limited to some particular group of humans at some particular time. In this discussion we are concerned with sex education at the present time, in what we think of as Western Civilization. Furthermore, we are not concerned with either theoretical or historical aspects. We must begin at the simplest possible point.

Consider the infant. For him both ends of his body are important as sources of interest and producers of satisfaction. Early in his life, however, a change takes place, a change with which he himself has nothing whatever to do. One end of him becomes socially acceptable and the other becomes dirty. One

end of him is constantly exposed to the public eye and the other very soon becomes private. He may eat in public and he may play with his food with his hands, but the functions which he produces with his bottom are not "nice" and his hands, in certain situations, become "nasty." There are, of course, reasons why this is so. What I want to emphasize here is that one set of physiological functions produced by one end of the human body are socially acceptable while equally important functions produced by the other end become surrounded with concealment and public aversion. After all, we do eat in public, although eating is not a pretty spectacle.

Now consider the infant's geography. That portion of his body which will, in time, become of primary importance in sex life is anatomically and functionally associated with the disapproved end of his body. This geographic location has profound psychological significance.

I would like to carry this idea of approved and disapproved functions a little further. As we said before, eating, a function of the upper end of the human body is socially sanctioned. So is kissing and yet kissing certainly is a part of the normal human sexual routine, at least in our part of the world. It may be done in public, with children, between man and woman, and in certain parts of the world, between man and man. It is so "innocent" that engaged couples may do it before their parents. Even moving picture censors pass it if its ultimate aim does not become too apparent. As long as it is confined to the

socially acceptable end of the human animal, it is permissible publicly, but it must not wander about. It must stay in its respectable neighborhood. It seems that the respectable end of the body can lend respectability to its functions.

Now think about the other end. If you fall on your face, you get sympathy. If you sit down suddenly and hard on your other end, you get laughed at. I do not want to overemphasize this idea, but I want to be sure that you keep it seriously in mind. Long before there is any sex activity, associations with dirt and secrecy and privacy are set up in regard to the primary sex areas. There seems to be little doubt that these associations carry over into adult life and become attached to sex activities as soon as these activities begin to manifest themselves.

Still another set of influences begins to work early in life. The child investigates its body and promptly meets adult horror and disgust in regard to anything that looks like masturbation. Hand smacking, followed later by punishment and lectures, reinforced by suggestions of destroyed "will power" and the inevitability of residence in an insane asylum add more and more repressive factors and tend to prolong the effects of the lesson into later life. Such lessons are often followed by gaudy lectures on venereal disease for the boys and on danger, disgrace, and social ostracism for the girls.

The sexual urge is potent and will break over most barriers, but when early training such as we have been discussing has been too lurid, the sex urge,

as it breaks through, carries with it a load of guilt and defilement, a conviction of sin and a need for penance. Some individuals, particularly women, avoid such feelings by convincing themselves that they engage in sex activity as a duty, as an obligation they owe their spouses. For others, the relaxation which should follow sex activity is at once cancelled by new tensions due to guilt feelings. Neither condition provides the individual with the equipment for happy adult living. If these factors operated alone, the world would be much fuller than it is of pathological purity, impotence, and frigidity. Ordinarily they are balanced biologically and socially.

The most powerful force counteracting the early repression is the example of happy, cooperating parents. There is good evidence that if you want to marry and live happily ever afterward, you should choose for your own parents people who live happily and cooperatively and should do the same for the parents of your partner. Growing up in a happy family sets a natural goal. Remember that we have already discussed the very important part played in the child's development by the need to be like, to identify himself with the parents of the same sex. This need to be like includes the wish to set up a personal family and to practice in it the authority, power and pleasure which we have seen our parents practice. There is no substitute for this parental example.

Although there is no substitute for this parental example, there are many forces in the social setting which supplement it. Think of the girl first. As she

grows she is taught domestic, so-called feminine, duties. She plays with toy washtubs and kitchen utensils. She is given dolls to nurse and care for in imitation of her mother. Her fairy tales always end "And then they married and lived happily forever after." Her stories, novels and movies present the joy of feminine surrender. All society extols the sacredness of motherhood. The married woman is presented to her as financially secure and socially acceptable. The Old Maid is presented as lonely, sour and ridiculous. Even if there were no biological urge, the girl would be encouraged to take up at least the external forms of adult sex life.

It is true that in some cases the original repressive training, reinforced by maternal example and teaching that sex is the curse of Eve created only for the satisfaction of Adam, may leave the girl stranded between fear and the desire for marital prestige. Similar types of fear may be created by the father's example, by brutality or by misunderstood and misinterpreted parental behavior. Normal sexual enjoyment and fear are incompatible. Under such circumstances, we see frigid women masquerading as wives and perpetuating their kind from a sense of purified duty. Fortunately, in most families, the balance is more even. The repressive factors continue to act during childhood and through puberty but are gradually modified by increasing maturity and social pressure. Both factors are necessary for normal development. It is only improper balance that leads to trouble.

For the boy the situation is somewhat simpler.

From the beginning the repressive factors in the social situation are not so powerful. Sexual experimentation is not so severely frowned upon nor are the consequences of deviation so disastrous. Coupled with this is general acceptance of potency as a desirable masculine attribute. The frigid woman may be accepted as a lady. The impotent man is an object of ridicule. For a man, the pressure is all in the direction of unrestrained activity except as this is limited on the one hand by family relationships and on the other by fear of venereal disease or illegitimate children.

You will remember that we talked about the mother as the boy's ideal of womanhood. Occasionally this mother ideal becomes so firmly fixed as a representation of everything that is good in womanhood that it flows over and colors all relationships with "Good Women." For the possessor of such ideals, all "Good Women" become untouchable mothers. Only "Bad Women" may be approached with the expectation of finding equality of desire. Mothers who are too pure and too possessive may raise sons whose only refuges are "impurity," perversion, or enough alcohol to drown their ideals and their fears.

For the boy as for the girl, the factors in the ordinary family setting can serve to balance each other. Early repressive training can be balanced by biological and social urges so that the course of sex development is directed toward a satisfactory compromise. Sometimes the balance is tipped out of line and failure results.

Failure to reach a successful compromise rests on

two very general causes. Most of us have grown up in families in which we could talk freely about our digestion or our corns or even our constipation, but in which sex activity, sex feelings, or sex ideals simply could not be mentioned in the family circle. From early childhood, in many cases, even the simplest questions were met with evasion, embarrassment, or disgust. The simple words with which sex might be discussed were barred. It is well to remember that we think with words. Whatever cannot be put into words and talked about remains vague and mysterious. It is all very well to say, "We should be able to talk about sex openly, frankly, and without embarrassment." The fact is that many of us cannot. We did not grow up in families in which that could be done and therefore we ourselves cannot build families in which it can be done with freedom and comfort. Because we cannot talk or think about it without strong emotional tones, sex remains mysterious and the necessary sex compromises, difficult.

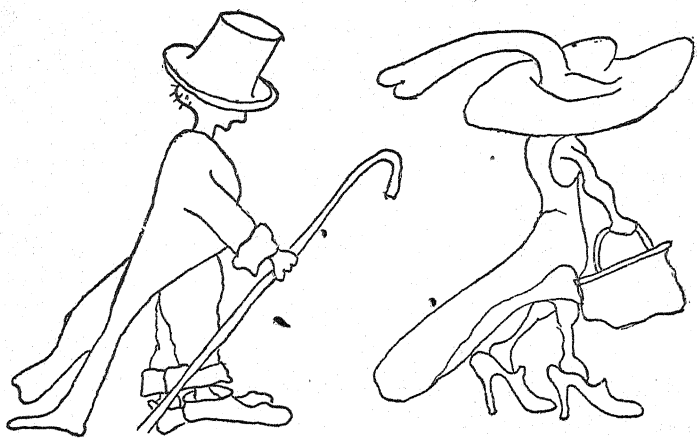
Sex does not remain vague only in talking and thinking. It is also difficult to measure. We can measure our height or weight or speed, or even our ability to pass examinations. We can count our friends and brag about the size of our income tax. We can measure how able we are in such fields and can defend our failures with good, openly expressed excuses. There is no measure of sex, except the other fellow's bragging. The result is that sex, more than any other aspect of personality or constitution, remains, in many families, unmentionable and unmeasurable.

We all tend to be apprehensive in the face of the unknown. More than that, we are very likely to attribute our difficulties or our disasters to the unknown. What happens so often is that individuals when they experience the almost universal feeling of being different from others, when they meet the very ordinary idea that other people do not like them or think they are queer, blame these attitudes on that part of their make-up which has remained most mysterious. Sex thus acquires not only the load of apprehension usually associated with the unknown but also the secondary apprehension caused by being used as a scapegoat for many feelings of difference.

The answer is obvious. Sex attitudes need to be taught as honestly and as verbally as possible. In the ordinary family that is likely to be done with only partial honesty and with relative dumbness (vocal, not intellectual). The ordinary human seems to survive such unsatisfactory teaching fairly well if the problem is not complicated by an additional weight of personal insecurity. If one feels that he is pretty good, pretty worthwhile, and reasonably well liked, he can blunder around with sex-experimentation, face inevitable occasional failure and embarrassment and still work through to a satisfactory compromise. Convince him that he is a fool and an outcast, and his first fumble may freeze up progress forever.

Sex education has often been written and talked about as if it were a separate, distinct, highly specialized part of human training. Actually, it is a part of living, one of the vast number of experiences which

a child must meet in graduated doses administered while life is still going on in safe homes. The child who is sure of his own worthwhileness, who is secure in his home situation, and is an intimate member of a group composed of his equals, has the best possible basis on which to build the necessary compromise. In this particular field, the background is more important than the specific form of the lesson.



VIII

YOU LEARN TO BE AN ADULT

MOST HUMANS LIVE FROM INFANCY TO SENILITY, passing through adolescence on the way, without either taking the world apart or destroying their own personalities. Adolescence is simply one of the periods of stress like beginning to breathe after you are born, learning to eat solid food, adjusting to school life, marriage, or the realization of middle age. All of us are exposed to these stresses as we live.

Each period has certain problems, and during each period you and I change because of time and experience. Time first matures and then destroys us. Experience offers us lessons which we must master,

dodge, or retreat from. It is important that time and experience go hand in hand. If the partnership of time and experience is broken, adolescence, the process of becoming an adult, may constitute an insurmountable problem.

In order to understand what we mean by the process of becoming an adult, we need to define the term "adult." A healthy adult is a sexually mature individual who has assumed independence, who is considered by other adults to be responsible for his own behavior, and who, in our culture, is expected to compete with other adults.

Now, for the sake of comparison, let us define the term "adolescent." An adolescent is an individual who is becoming sexually mature and is trying to learn what to do about it. He is an individual who has been set up on his own two feet and is now expected to start down the road alone and get what he needs without expecting to have it handed to him.

Hold in mind these three requirements, sexual maturity, independent responsibility, and the ability to meet competition, while we discuss those aspects of the process of becoming an adult which produce the major dangers to mental health. Sexual maturity is not something which happens suddenly. It is based on a long period of physiological development. It is influenced by heredity, possibly by climate, diet, or disease. Sometimes sexual maturity occurs early, sometimes late. The time of its occurrence, in relation to the degree of independence and responsibility which the individual has acquired by that time, may be very

important as far as socially acceptable behavior is concerned. Without personal responsibility acquired by early training, a bicycle, a gun, or an automobile may be an acute social menace. The same is true of mature sex glands.

Because of this danger, independence and responsibility must be timed to meet sexual maturity. Unfortunately, independence and acceptance of responsibility develop even more irregularly than sexual maturity. You will sometimes see a nine- or ten-year-old child who seems perfectly able to care for himself under ordinary circumstances and, beside him, an equally intelligent fifteen-year-old who needs to be told when to put one foot in front of the other. In contrast to sexual maturity, independence is much more a matter of training. Your parents cannot stop your eventual physical maturity, but they can certainly keep you dependent. They can make all your decisions for you, they can protect you from all consequence of your own behavior and can thus prolong the period of childhood far into what should be independent adulthood. Such improper timing, timing which permits an individual to become sexually mature before becoming personally responsible, can make not only adolescence but adult life chaotic.

Accompanying sexual maturity and independence, competition is the third factor which acquires special significance during adolescence. Competition, in one form or another, is no new experience for the child who is becoming adult. It is one of the fundamental characteristics of almost all living things. Look

at the weeds fighting to choke out your lawn grass, or watch little blind puppies pushing each other about in search of their dinner. Not competition of itself, but the human additions to it constitute the new problem the adolescent must master.

These human additions arise from two causes. The first is the very long period of protection from competition which our highly technical civilization provides. For many years the child is protected and led through the intricacies of education. The child may work hard and may compete for honors or marks, but he is still protected by his student status and relieved of many of his responsibilities. Not until after "Commencement" does he "Begin," and the beginning is often put off till he is twenty or sometimes twenty-five. Then, suddenly, he is no longer student, but worker. I have known students who married and had families but still maintained their student status, protected and supported by their parents. Some such people were taught to meet competition in their families, as they grew up, and for them the change from student to worker was not difficult. For others the timing was wrong and the lesson left unlearned. They had trouble.

Go back, for a minute, to the puppies. They are learning vital lessons in competition, they are learning them early, in a family setting, and among their equals. In the human family the lessons may not be conspicuous but the framework is there and, if it is allowed to operate without too much interference, lessons in how to meet competition may be learned

early, easily, and safely. The only child, the over-protected child, and the child deprived of a chance to mix freely with his own age group, may miss these needful experiences. If he continues to miss them the process of becoming an adult may lack one of its essential ingredients. Man, particularly man in our Western Civilization, has added another dangerous aspect to competition. He has made it a virtue in itself and has set it up as the basis of his economic system. This places a heavy premium on the ability to meet competition and handicaps the individual who cannot compete successfully and pleasurably. I want to call your particular attention to this human addition, because it is one of the points at which the demands of our community living diverge sharply from the type of training which the ordinary family is best equipped to give.

The ordinary family is a cooperative, not a competitive group. The members tend to protect and support, rather than to destroy, one another. The change from a cooperative member of a family group to an independent competitive member of society may be very severe unless the individual has learned the technique of meeting competition before he steps out alone.

It is true that many present-day families have lost most of their cooperative attitudes and have become competitive units in which a constant struggle goes on for favorite radio programs, the funnies, or the family car. This is almost always an unequal struggle between children of assorted ages, sexes, and

strengths. It is almost never fought out between equals. More than that it is fought before prejudiced parental referees who protect the weak and sometimes play favorites.

Such competition between unequally matched rivals, fought before biased judges, tends to encourage indirect methods. Temper tantrums may get for the weak what neither strength nor skill can supply. Noisiness, showing off, may be the most successful method of competing for attention. Illness may take the place of effort. Such conditions lay the basis for mental illness, rather than for adult competition.

Experience in competition is obviously necessary if an individual is to meet the demands of present-day adult living in the western world. Such competition must be approached without excessive fear and with a feeling that success is at least possible if not likely. While the family is essentially a cooperative group, best designed to teach responsibility, the school group, and the play-groups, particularly for smaller children, are individualistic and competitive. Such competition is between relatively homogeneous units. It is sometimes cruel and relentless, but it is much more like adult competition than are the unequal rivalries within the home.

If a child is to pass through adolescence happily it is necessary for that child to have acquired personal responsibility, which he learns largely at home, and to have become accustomed to competition, which he experiences chiefly with his own age group,

around, but outside the home. If this double equipment is timed to meet sexual maturity the process of becoming an adult presents few problems.

We have spoken of sexual maturity, of responsibility, and of competition as if their significance lay in external events. As a matter of fact human behavior is not regulated by external events. We do what we do not because of what things are but because of what they mean to us personally. Attitudes are more important than events.

Consider puberty and sex behavior. There is no other human activity so surrounded with attitudes and ideals. A child may approach mature sex development with the feeling that this is a normal, matter-of-fact process, part of a preparation for things to come, or may approach these changes with the idea that anything connected with sex is dirty and vulgar, to be hidden as far as possible and to be approached with feelings of guilt and fear. If he meets the stress of being recognized as an adult handicapped by the latter set of ideas, his period of adolescence will be difficult.

I do not want to give you the impression that any child ever reaches puberty and enters adolescence without ideas about sex. That would be far from the truth. Attitudes toward sex begin long before there is any adult sex development. They begin with knowledge of the obvious body differences which any child can see; they are re-enforced by training in modesty, cleanliness, and morality; they pattern themselves on the attitudes and behavior of the adults with whom

the child lives. They have been built up during the child's entire previous life.

What is true of attitudes toward sex is also true of attitudes toward independence and competition. The child who has been taught that his own judgment is usually wrong naturally hesitates to make decisions and to take independent action. If his parents have impressed him, all through his life, with the idea that "Mother knows best," he may have a tough time when he has to use his own mind instead of his mother's. This is particularly true if the family attitude has convinced him that his own mind isn't any too good anyway.

The child who has always depended on his parents to get him out of difficulties, who has always run home to mother when "the boys are picking on me," and who has always found his overprotective mother receptive to his stories of injustice, has had a poor preparation for adult competition. Any child who approaches adolescence with the idea that he is weaker, stupider, less attractive, less well-liked than his companions will certainly have a harder time than his more self-confident companions.

Now one more point. Adolescence is a period of change and when things change too fast even mature individuals become confused. The adolescent needs a stable home in which to live while change is going on. He must experiment with being an adult. He must try adult ways or, at least, what seem to him to be adult ways. Sometimes he will succeed, be confident and obnoxiously boastful. At other times he will make

mistakes. He should make mistakes, because they are an essential part of experience. When he does he will be hurt, and when he is hurt he will have an urgent need to return to the warm security of childhood. Think of the boy dressed for his first party with his hair slicked and his collar too big for his new Adam's apple. Laughing at him is no minor matter. He is learning to be a man. That is his most difficult, as well as his most important, lesson. He must learn it, and he will learn it more surely if he has a safe base on which to rest for a time if the lesson is too difficult to master in one session. It is like standing up to put on your shoes. You can do it on one foot, but it is very much easier if you have a firm seat.

Sometimes the adolescent seems to have no use for the world of his elders, to be sure how it ought to be remade and to want to change it right away. Such desires are based on the need to be independent and free from adult restrictions, but along with them there goes the need of the adolescent to be like the others of his group. Think of their slang, their clothes, their dances, their music, their clubs. If you know adolescents, think of the stormy tragedies that can be created when they are not allowed to do "what the rest of the bunch is doing." They are changing, they are different, but they must have a group to be like. There is no place for "rugged individualism" in adolescence. This need for a stable world in which the adolescent can do his own changing is one of the most important factors in the present-day situation. If the world and the adolescent both change too fast

and at the same time, there are no guideposts left, no fixed points which can be held to.

If we do not know what the adolescent's world will be like and if we have no idea what a person must know in order to live happily in that new world, then we must teach those points of view which are most helpful in meeting totally new and unpredictable situations.

If you must face a new situation with no idea as to how it can be met and with no experience to guide you, the greatest advantage you can have is a secure position from which to study the problem. Theoretically, such security might exist within the social structure or within the personality, but we must remember that the only ways of living which adults have learned and can teach were developed to meet the problems of the world in which these adults grew up. Many will have little practical usefulness in the new world in which the adolescent will live. They may be as out of date as knowledge of how to skin a buffalo or duck a witch or practice Poor Richard's thrift. It is perfectly obvious that adolescents cannot be given external security which will protect them for the rest of their lives because no one can foresee the world in which they will live. They must face their problems in the midst of change. We, therefore, must try to build the necessary security within the adolescent personality. This security cannot be added to a personality as you would add a coat of paint to a house. It must be built into the structure.

Put into the very simplest terms—the individual,

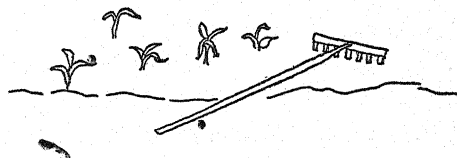
at adolescence, more than at any other time in his life, needs "internal security," needs to feel that he is not too different from his fellows, that he is neither stupider nor more awkward nor more likely to make a failure. He needs to have experienced independence a step at a time and to know that the results of following his own judgment do not lead to disaster and may lead to success. He needs to be sure there is at least one person in the world who loves him, not for the pride and satisfaction they find in him, nor because of his good looks, nor his achievement, but just for himself. Sure of himself, having experienced the satisfaction of some independent activity and confident of at least one stable and trustworthy person, the adolescent can face personal change and social upheaval with the greatest possible chance of success.

How is the adolescent to be given this sense of personal security? To answer this question we must consider the basic ingredients of personal security and match them against the qualities of an ordinary home. The adolescent needs a stable base from which he can practice his developing powers; he needs unchanging affection; he needs praise; he needs freedom from ridicule and sarcasm, and he needs a long background of training in independence and responsibility which gradually increase as his strength increases. The ordinary family is the most stable social unit. It is the unit in which the adolescent most naturally expects to find affection, sympathy and understanding because these are the ties which hold families together. Again, the family is the unit in which the child learned both per-

sonal and mutual responsibility by discovering that his acts contributed to the comfort or discomfort not of himself alone but of the family unit as a whole. The very fact of family name and family tradition helps to give the adolescent that sense of belonging which is so useful during periods of stress.

Thus there are built into the ordinary home those elements of stability, love and protection which the adolescent needs as supporting factors while he practices the final stages of maturity and independence toward which his entire previous experience has been leading. Adolescence represents no sudden upheaval in the course of human development. Preparation for adolescence begins when the individual begins to live. The so-called problems of adolescence are not problems of adolescence at all. They are problems of inadequate preparation for change. If each step in living leads comfortably to the next, there should be no insurmountable barriers.

There can be no more futile order than "Stop being a baby." You cannot stop being a baby. You have to give it up very gradually, a step at a time.



IX

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

THE FIRST ESSENTIAL FOR THE CULTIVATION OF mental health is a clear idea of what the final crop is supposed to be. Too often those of us who talk about mental health have behaved like the amateur gardener looking at the pictures in a seed catalogue. We have expected flawless perfection. The best we should hope for is human beings who, in spite of scars and soft spots, are still useful and happy. A definition which sets up actually attainable ends is the starting point for any sound mental health plan.

Since mental health is a function of living human beings, it must be defined in terms of active human relationships. The following definition meets the requirements.

Mental health consists of the ability to live:

1. Within the limits imposed by bodily equipment.
2. With other human beings.
3. Happily.
4. Productively.
5. Without being a nuisance.

By such definition mental health follows no rigid formula according to which each individual must be molded. It does not demand any fantastic state of complete understanding in which the possessor never dances with rage nor weeps with sorrow. It allows room for love and hate and revenge. It excludes neither all saintliness nor all sin. It represents a compromise between what we are and what we must do if our fellowmen are to accept us as one of themselves.

Because we are dealing with humans descended from humans the foundation of mental health rests on heredity, but since heredity is practically the only factor about which parents can do absolutely nothing after they have once gotten their hands on the child, it is not heredity but an attitude toward heredity which forms the starting point for a mental health plan.

Older psychiatry, largely concerned with insanity and very much influenced by unproven ideas about human heredity, placed great weight on "good" or "bad" family histories. We are very much less certain than we used to be regarding the importance of direct inheritance of mental illness. Even in those conditions about which we have some facts, we be-

lieve only in a tendency which may be increased or decreased by what happens as the child lives.

Today none of us believes that poor heredity forms an absolute and final barrier to mental health but, on the other hand, we are equally sure that the best heredity in the world cannot guarantee mental health in the face of serious accident or drastic mis-handling.

The essential attitude toward heredity is one of respect, but not fatalism. Heredity supplies the raw material from which the act of living molds human personalities. The stage on which the first few years of living are played may be just as important as the stuff of which the actor is made. This feeling about the modifiability of human material is important to parents in relation to their children. It is also important to adults in regard to their own lives. It is important in two ways. Some people say to me, "I can't possibly need to see a psychiatrist; there has *never* been any mental illness in *my* family." Often that statement serves as an excuse for putting off needed help until too late. Other people say, "There is no hope for me, my great aunt died insane." This does not make any sense either.

While heredity does not determine mental health it does set certain limits, but even these limits can be modified. For example, there are families in which, generation after generation, children have been born lacking the middle joint of one or more fingers. These jointless fingers are stiff, they do not bend. You would not expect these stiff-fingered children to become

pianists or stenographers. Heredity has set limits for them, but that is not the end of the story. Today, modern surgery makes it possible to build a new joint or, at worst, to take off the stiff finger. Such a person might then, in spite of an hereditary handicap, learn to play the piano or become a nine-fingered typist. He could probably never play in concerts, but his hereditary handicap would have been partly overcome by treatment and training. When someone talks to you about heredity, think of these stiff-fingered families.

Similar modifications can take place in regard to personality traits, although they are much more difficult to demonstrate because of the slight extent to which heredity can be proved in relation to personality. There is some evidence that genius, whatever that is, can be inherited. It seems possible that ability in art, music, literature, and dramatics may travel in families but, in such cases, we must never lose sight of the powerful effect of example, training, and the incentive to follow in the footsteps of famous parents. The same idea holds for such matters as bad temper or inability to do arithmetic. Suppose the child hears, "She is just like her mother. I could never add two and two and make the answer come out right. She must have inherited it from me." Can you think of a better excuse for not trying to learn arithmetic or for taking a little quiet pride in not knowing how to add? Such traits seem to be "contagious" rather than hereditary.

Many people, talking to me about children, whis-

per, "You know, of course, that this poor child's mother is in the Asylum?" I am sure that an obviously and recognizedly ill mother in a mental hospital is less damaging to children than a mother with unadmitted peculiarities who stays at home and infects her children with her warped attitudes, no matter how "sane" she or her ancestry may be.

As to personality traits implanted in children because of the mother's grief, fright, or feelings of wickedness during pregnancy, it is certain that the child's traits are learned from the mother after the child's birth. More fantastic still are the stories about somebody's great aunt who is said to have seen a monkey and then had a child with a tail. By the time she knew she was going to have a child and had worked herself into a state fit to be frightened by monkeys, the child was certainly well past the stage at which a tail could have developed.

Heredity is set after the human egg has been fertilized and the pattern develops slowly, covering the entire lifetime of the individual. One of the most profoundly awe-inspiring facts in all medicine is that two cells can combine and then divide and keep on growing and dividing, according to a set plan, without mistakes, according to a fixed time-table, until a human being, capable of independent life, is produced. Accidents should not surprise us; approximate perfection should be a cause of wonder.

Accidents do happen, before birth, at birth, and throughout the rest of life. The best heredity in the world, from the mental health standpoint, cannot

guarantee immunity if essential parts of your personal equipment are damaged by accident or disease.

The prevention of such accidents by means of better care for expectant mothers, by better obstetrics, by better public health measures, which reduce the number of small children exposed to serious childhood diseases, are all essential parts of a mental health program.

It must be emphasized that while accident or illness may produce serious damage to structure, the attitude of the physician and the mother toward the sick child may be more damaging than the illness. Stop and think about this for a minute. If the damage done by disease or injury is permanent, the child is going to have to live with this damage the rest of his life. What this child thinks and feels about his own damaged body may make the difference between happiness and misery. Now note one other aspect. What the parents feel about this damaged child is the soil in which the child's feeling about himself grows. Every psychiatrist has seen parents who could not accept the fact that a child of theirs was damaged and who insisted on pushing that child into competition with undamaged companions. The results are often serious. On the other hand, the reverse of this picture is almost equally common. Parents sometimes limit a child's activity far beyond any point that is justified by actual damage. Such a child lives, always conscious of the damage, constantly aware of feelings of difference, persistently searching for means of concealing or compensating for the handicap. Life under

those conditions leaves little energy free for the development of mental health.

No physician can deliver a baby, prescribe a feeding formula, or carry out the simplest examination without assuming some responsibility for the future mental health of the child. The impression which the physician gives the mother may be the starting point for a chain of events leading to happiness or misery.

The importance of early attitudes toward uncorrectable damage is nicely illustrated by the story of a little girl I knew years ago. She was born without the left hand. Her arm came down to a wrist and then ended in a smooth stump. She was pretty, vivacious, and intelligent. You can understand what a shock this deformity must have been to her father and mother. They handled the situation wonderfully. There was no attempt to cover it up. She did not wear a long left sleeve to hide her stump. She was taught to use it just as much as possible. No one made her feel ashamed or sorry for herself. She would show you her arm quite naturally and was rather proud of what she had learned to do with it. Her case serves as an example of family attitude compensating, as far as possible, for physical handicap.

There are groups of diseases passing down in families and producing handicaps for which compensations cannot be made. It is obvious that no individual who knows that he is a carrier of such traits has a right to pass them on. It should be noted that these clearly hereditary conditions belong, in far the

largest part, to the group of diseases associated with actual damage to the human structures and have little relation to those conditions labeled "Nervousness," "Insanity," "Alcoholism," "Bad Temper," and so forth.

Conspicuous among the conditions in which hereditary factors have considerable importance stands feeble-mindedness. Certain facts must always be kept in mind in regard to this convenient label. In the first place, it is a label used to cover an enormous number of conditions. It is as silly to talk of "The Feeble-minded" as it is to talk about "The Criminals" or "The Fevers" or "The Insect Pests of the Garden." Within each group there are many degrees, many sources of origin, and many individual treatment requirements.

Some people are smarter than others. At one end of the scale stand the world's geniuses and at the other lie some of the helpless human vegetables. Through this uninterrupted row of people, each a little smarter than the next, we have made an arbitrary division and announced that people below our line are too stupid to compete with the rest of us. We label such people "Feeble-minded." There are, however, many degrees along this scale of intelligence and a little extra training on the one hand, or a little handicap on the other, may push an individual above or below the dividing line.

Whether or not you acquire the label "Feeble-minded" depends in part on the company you keep. In some company you may be very stupid and still

not attract attention. That is one of the reasons why many mental defectives are happy in an institution filled with their equals. I once lived in an institution for mental defectives, and as long as I stayed *inside* the institution I was an outstanding genius. Both feeble-mindedness and genius are relative terms.

In addition to covering a wide range of ability, the label "Feeble-minded" covers many causes. Part of the group so labeled is produced by hereditary defect and part, probably very nearly half, is caused by non-hereditary factors such as birth injuries and serious infectious diseases occurring in infancy. The prevention of feeble-mindedness is not simply a matter of segregating the feeble-minded in institutions or of sterilization. Part of a preventive program belongs to obstetrics and part to public health.

Very unfortunately, feeble-mindedness has become mixed up with the discussion of mental hygiene. Some clinics which are labeled "Mental Hygiene," and some physicians who feel that they are working in mental hygiene, are largely occupied with picking out the feeble-minded and hanging labels on them. This, to my mind, is not mental hygiene at all, though there are mental hygiene factors associated with feeble-mindedness, just as there are similar factors associated with all other crippling conditions.

I might make my attitude a little more emphatic. A person with one arm, or with paralyzed legs, or with a damaged heart, or with seriously defective vision, may learn to live with other human beings, happily and productively, within the limits set by his

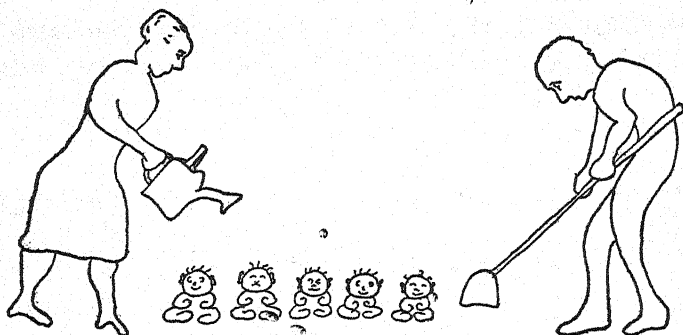
handicap. Such a person, in spite of his crippling, should be classed as enjoying mental health. The same point of view is valuable in thinking about the feeble-minded. They are crippled intellectually but, within the limits of their crippling, they can be taught to live among other people, happily, usefully, and without making a nuisance of themselves. We might then talk about a mentally healthy feeble-minded person. Successful mental hygiene teaching might make the difference between an institution and community life for such people.

For mental health the essential point of view is that heredity supplies the material with which we must work. Education, training, and medical skill are the techniques with which we work. It sometimes seems that education and training are recognized as mental hygiene techniques but that the mental hygiene aspects of the medical arts are lost sight of.

Think of a girl whose front teeth stick straight out, or of a boy with pimples on his face. No one would deny that the correction of such defects makes life easier and happier. In such cases a dentist or a dermatologist practices mental hygiene. The same holds true for complicated conditions like harelip. You can go through a long list, such as club-feet, crossed eyes, deafness, poor vision, bad tonsils, adenoids, glandular abnormalities, and consider medical, surgical and dental correction as a basic part of any mental health plan.

Stated in the simplest terms, the object of this portion of a mental health program should be to com-

bine hereditary endowment with the best possible physical development and with medical treatment so as to form a level foundation on which to build the structure of mental health. We must recognize, however, that it is not always possible to create a level and firm foundation. There are hereditary defects for which little or no compensation can be created. There are limits to what can be done by medicine. In some cases the mental hygiene structure must be built upon a foundation which is far from level. Fortunately, for all of us, even this can be done.



X

CULTIVATION OF MENTAL HEALTH

THE WISEST AND MOST LOVING PARENTS CAN NEVER *give* a child mental health. They can only protect it, cultivate it, and provide a setting in which it may flourish. The immunizing experience which we have discussed and the lessons which must be learned represent details of cultivation. Heredity and physical care represent the seed and the soil. Over all of these there must be a guiding principle by which each successive step may be directed. Our immediate job is to discuss that principle in simple terms.

If we can accept this statement of our goal, it is possible to outline one quality, the absence of which makes attainment of mental health highly improbable. The existence of this quality within any personality does not guarantee mental health, but it does

make it much more likely. With it mental health is at least possible, without it, highly doubtful. Giving this quality a name is dangerous because labels are so easily misunderstood. Defining it in simple terms is almost impossible.

Equanimity is one of the older names for this quality. The tranquillity and self-possession which equanimity suggests seem to me to be the result of the quality we are discussing, rather than the quality itself. Imperturbability presents part of the picture but suggests a person to whom nothing makes any difference, whom nothing can reach. That is very far from the quality I am trying to describe. I am not thinking of a person who is detached from the world but of one who can take what happens without being pushed off balance, without being panicked into useless overactivity. The quality I am describing contains elements of self-respect and self-confidence. Some of it springs from the feeling of not being too different from other human beings, from the absence of "feelings of aloneness." It is one of the qualities which make you able to meet other people comfortably, expectantly, and without fear.

For the sake of convenience, we will refer to this quality as a sense of "Personal Security." I do not mean external security such as comes from jobs or money or other possessions. Personal security is internal, part of the individual, something that could exist in solitary confinement. You will feel at once that this quality has attributes of religious faith particularly insofar as religious faith gives an individual indirect

faith in himself and his destiny. I have avoided the use of the term "faith" because there are other elements which also contribute their part.

The best way to develop an understandable picture of this personal security is to illustrate it. If, while walking down the middle of a big, wide road, you meet a group of people coming toward you and you feel sure that they want to pass, you need not become afraid. The road is wide. On that wide road you do not fear that accidental contacts with other humans might push you into the ditch. On the other hand, if you are walking across a single log over a deep stream, you might well be apprehensive if a half-grown child approached from the opposite direction. He might bump you off the log. In such a case your situation would have deprived you of your sense of security.

If you have ever been badly sunburned or if you have ever had an arm sore from a recent typhoid inoculation, your security suffered and you protected yourself because even accidental contact with other humans might hurt. In such a case you lost your sense of personal security because of something that happened to you.

You may also lose your sense of security because of "psychological" threats, because of what you believe people may do to you or think about you. Witness the temporary but very acute embarrassment which many of us experience if we are forced to stand up and let a large audience look at us. The audience does not often throw things but that does not prevent

shaking knees and dry throats. In such cases *internal* security has been damaged.

This feeling of personal security is a vital element in what psychiatrists refer to as inter-personal relations, the give and take which goes on between "Me" and the rest of the people in the world who are "Not Me." If we learn to expect cheating at the hands of the Not Me's, if we distrust all of them, if we fear that they will get ahead of us and deprive us of our rights, privileges and possessions, we must stay on watch every minute and we can never feel secure with any human. If we feel that we are stupider than other people, if we believe that we have done silly, wicked or dirty things, if we are convinced that other people could never really like us if they found out all that we know about ourselves, then we have to spend time and energy building up false fronts because our personal security has been damaged. Did you ever notice the false two-story fronts that were sometimes built on little one-story shops in villages? The pathetic effort to make these buildings look like something they were not always comes to my mind when I see a person with damaged personal security trying to hide a perfectly respectable and useful personality behind the same kind of false two-story front.

By contrast, the comfort and ease of a secure person is conspicuous. Such people are not easily insulted. They do not take every accidental neglect as a personal slight. They are not overawed by superiors because they can accept, without feeling personally worthless, the fact that some people may know more,

have more, or be able to do more than they. They do not have to be snobbish toward their subordinates because they do not need to demonstrate their personal value publicly. Such secure people can live with their fellow men comfortably. They buy few remedies for "B.O." or halitosis. They are not suspicious of themselves or others. They can face the problems of living and can experiment with solutions, freed from any need to defend themselves and saved from the need for either unplanned attack or panicky retreat. Dire circumstance may destroy them but, because they have security within themselves, they put up a better fight.

The existence of personal security does not guarantee mental health, but it does make it much more likely. For this reason it is presented as *the* important basis for mental health.

There is one other reason for stressing the mental health value of personal security. It is a sort of common denominator. Much that happens during life may threaten mental health. Any number of experiences may make comfortable inter-personal relations difficult. No simple, workable plan could be drawn up by which all these highly individual threats might be avoided or neutralized. Through all of them, however, there runs the fact that a personally secure individual, expending all his energy "looking Out" and none "looking In," has an advantage. His personal security serves as a sort of universal antidote.

All of us show signs of some damage to our security. If people call us shy, or withdrawn, or seclu-

sive, our security has probably been damaged. The same thing is likely to be true if people label us as timid, or fearful, or undecided. Paradoxically, if we are the life of the party, show-offs, smarties, cocksure, aggressive, opinionated, then psychiatrists are very likely to believe that we are overacting in attempts to hide damaged personal security.

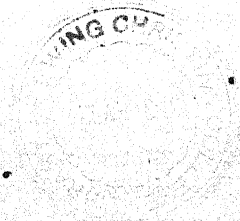
How, by whom, and when our security may have been damaged is a problem for the psychiatrist to work out individually with each individual patient. The causes are multiple, personal, non-specific, but often reversible. No one incident produces lasting damage to personal security. Security is worn away by repeated blows as a rock is worn away by water, and the extent of the damage depends on the material of which the person is made just as the wearing of the rock depends on its hardness and its solubility.

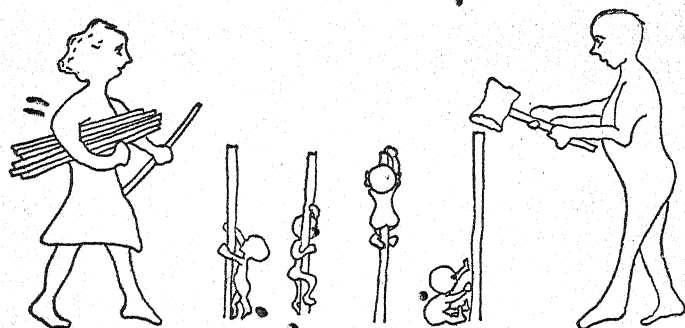
—An almost identical chain of events may damage one individual seriously, may do absolutely nothing to a second, and may provide valuable stimulation for a third. Fortunately for all of us, and for the practice of either child guidance or adult psychiatry, these chains of events, once started in a certain direction, may be redirected or reversed.

Sound physical health, good heredity, and good medical care can form a solid foundation for a sense of personal security. Adequate dosage of immunizing experience may provide protection for the growing organism but, unless the germs, the actual beginnings, of personal security already exist within the organism, care alone cannot produce results.

Fortunately, the germs of confidence, trust, and personal security are part of the original equipment of most humans and are almost automatically nurtured by the care given infants. The beginnings are easily seen in the confident way an unfrightened and unspoiled infant responds to friendly advances. Such responses certainly suggest that friendly reception is expected without self-consciousness and without reservations. Many small children possess a generous measure of personal security in spite of the fact that they are relatively weak and powerless. To be sure, the self-confidence and security of infancy is easily destroyed and must of necessity be modified to meet the practical demands of living. Nevertheless, because it does exist, our problem in the mental hygiene field is not to create something new but to develop and guide a quality which is already present.

The importance of this circumstance should never be overlooked. The quality which we need for the basis of mental health exists naturally and widely among unhurt small children. If we can discover how to protect this quality, how to foster its development, and how to subject it to the modifications which are necessary for group living, without either distorting or destroying it, then we have discovered the essentials of our mental hygiene program.





XI

PROVIDING THE SUPPORTS

WE MUST NOW CONSIDER HOW MENTAL HEALTH may be given the firm support it needs for complete development. This can be stated in simple terms. The full development of mental health depends upon the existence, within the family circle, of three common qualities. They have nothing to do with economic status, education, social position, or even with saintliness or sin. They are an integral part of the relationships which develop between a child and the people who mean something to the child. Their importance is testified to when some child from a home filled with poverty, dirt, disease, and apparent neglect or abuse turns out to be a stable and respected citizen. The fatal results of their absence shows in those families which seem to offer every advantage but still

lack warm human relationships between parents and children. If these common qualities are kept in mind they explain why it is that mental health is not the exclusive prerogative of any social group, sect, or race.

The first of these essential qualities is affection, the second is praise, and the third is consistency in the sense of freedom from rapid, frequent, unpredictable change. Each of these qualities contributes certain specific elements to the support of mental health, and each makes its contribution in a slightly different field. Affection is a relationship which is developed with another living human being. Praise relates to the individual's own evaluation of himself. Consistence sets the pattern by which man's institutions may be judged. Administered in proper doses these three elements make it possible for a child to deal comfortably with other humans, with himself, and with organized society. We will have to discuss each of these qualities separately.

Beginning with affection, I am again hampered by the meaning of words. When I say "Affection" I do not know what picture comes into your mind. The quality I am trying to indicate might be called "Trust" in the sense that you feel the person who gives it to you means well by you. It might also be called "Faith" to the extent that if it exists between two people, they do not need to watch each other and can accept each other's behavior "At face value." As I am using the term, it means that quality which lets two people come close to each other without fear

of ridicule or rejection, expecting understanding, sympathy, tolerance, and protection, if protection is needed.

Relationships of that quality exist between mothers and very young children. As the child grows, the separation between "Me" and "Other People" inevitably increases and a larger and larger part of thinking and feeling tends to become "personal," hidden from the rest of the world, reserved for day-dreams and fantasies. If this process of separating "Me" from "Other People" goes too far, if "We" becomes only a word, not a feeling, the individual becomes isolated and loses the ability to get close to other people. The ability to *feel* "We" is a product of affection. Once firmly established it serves as a major support for mental health. If you doubt this listen to the "I's" in the conversation of your "nervous" friends and note how often "I feel," "I think," "I want" take the place of "We like," "We are planning," "We did." If you can feel "We," you are on the road to mental health.

As we noted before, the first advances the child makes are toward his mother, and the first advances he receives come from the mother. For a while relationships with people are limited almost entirely to the mother, but they gradually expand to include the outside world. Psychiatrists, in general, are quite sure that the patterns for future relationships with other people are set by what happens between persons within the family. No one believes that these patterns are permanently set or that they are unchangeable.

Experience through life will certainly modify them, but the general trends are built up quite early.

Too often affection is taught according to a pattern which runs something like this, "If you do that, your mother won't love you any more," or "If you are bad, you are going to wake up some morning and find your mother gone." Under such conditions, affection is destroyed. It becomes nothing more than a commodity which is bought and sold, so much affection gained in return for so much personal freedom lost. A person who has learned that he must weigh what he must pay for affection always thinks "Me," never "We," when he tries to make contacts. One axiom can be set up. Do not buy or sell affection. Give it away.

Selling of affection is not all on one side. Some children discover that their own affection can be sold. In the chapter on children as possessions we talked about parents who lived in constant fear of loss. In such homes a child may learn to sell affection for license to dominate the home.

Because it cannot be bought or sold without being destroyed, affection is not a tool which can be used to enforce discipline, but it can live and flourish under discipline. It can exist and be made evident in spite of correction and punishment. It will survive violent outbursts of temper. You can keep on loving your mother even if she sometimes gets mad and smacks you over, provided you are sure of her.

One other aspect of affection must be mentioned here. Affection—steady, constant, and warm—is a

vital necessity. Its absence is damaging but overdoses are poisonous. Devouring overprotection, provided under the impression that it is affection and according to the reasoning that if one pill is good, two pills must be twice as good, can be, without doubt, one of the damaging ingredients of family life. I talked about this aspect in detail in the chapter on children as possessions.

You may feel that I have overemphasized the value of affection and the need to protect the ability to give it and receive it. I know that these are very rare qualities among my patients. I am sure everyone needs, in his early life, one other person of whose love and affection he can be perfectly sure, one person whom he can trust without question, not because he, himself, is good, or beautiful, or valuable, or smart, but solely because he is himself. If he has ever had such a person in his life he escapes many of the risks of mental illness to which his less fortunate companions are exposed.

Praise is the second element which is necessary in a home if that home is to provide a firm foundation for mental health. Praise, like affection, helps us to approach other people with confidence. Early experience with affection tends to make us more confident of other people. Experience with praise makes us more confident of ourselves. Both are essential aspects of happy inter-personal relations.

In order to point out the part which praise plays, I want to remind you of what the world must have looked like to you when you were a small child.

Throughout the most impressionable period of your life you lived in a world of knees and skirt edges, of table-tops you could not see over, of stair-steps that were knee-high, and of ideas you must not know about or talk about till you grew up. Any grownups who came along could pick you up, kiss you, and put you down whenever they felt like it. Almost anyone could take away anything you had. You never put this world into words but you did live in it, and you lived in it during the time that you learned about more new things than you will ever meet in your life again. You were little when you met your first dog, and cow, and horse; your first fire-engine, your first railroad train; your first stranger, policeman, doctor, school teacher, or preacher. The same is true of your first thunderstorm and your first experience with how hot fire can be. You learned about God and looked at the stars for the first time when you were still knee-high. Your point of view about many things in life began to form when you were little and everything else was big. It has never surprised me that so many people are uncertain about their own real value or that almost any of my patients will talk glibly about their "Inferiority Complex," whatever those words mean. I suspect them of being traces of once having been little.

The way you were spoken to when you were little rarely helped to make you surer of yourself. Think, for a minute, what the phrase, "John, I wish you would speak to your son," usually means. Think what "Behave yourself" usually means. Think of the

tone that so often goes with "Did you do that?" or "Why did you do that?" Count the "Don'ts" and "Stops" and "Quits" in the ordinary child's life and compare them with "That's fine," "My, you are smart," "I didn't know you were that smart," "Try it; I think you are big enough," and I believe that you will see why I place judicious use of praise as one of the major supports of security and mental health. It cannot be any fun to be little and weak and always wrong and to have it rubbed in.

Counteracting these belittling experiences there are successes and victories and fun and daydreams of being a queen or a knight in full armor. There is also the very concrete fact that sometimes when you do something well, make a success, someone actually tells you that you are smart, brave, good, kind, or beautiful. The rewards of success are important, but they depend so much on your own judgment of yourself and on your own estimation of the value of your achievement that they can never take the place of openly expressed praise coming from the outside. Regardless of how pleased you may feel about yourself, it is comforting to have your opinion backed up by praise, expressed in words, by someone on the outside.

Just here it might be well to note that children believe what their parents tell them. If a father says to his son "You are a fool," that son believes his father. "You are a fool" does not always have to be said in words. It can be implied by gesture, by tone of voice, or by behavior which simply brushes the

child aside as helpless or incompetent. If such behavior is continued persistently by the people who are thought to be all-powerful and all-wise, the child's self-confidence and self-respect are eventually damaged. Serious damage to the self-respect can be the basis for mental illness.

Belittling must not be confused with correction or direction. If we are to be happy, we must learn, very early, that both the strong and the weak obey the law. To learn this lesson both deprivation and punishment may be necessary. They can be administered without damage to the self-respect. If generous doses of praise are added during periods of conformity and achievement, the balance can be maintained.

Many people feel that praise spoils children and turns them into "smarties." License, indulgence, and lack of training in responsibility are the factors back of spoiling. The smartie is nearly always someone who is trying to attract attention, who is showing off, who is afraid you will not notice him, who fears that if he does not wisecrack or talk back you may think him stupid, or timid, or of no account. In almost all cases, he is suffering from starvation for legitimate attention and praise. If he feels that he is reasonably worthwhile, he does not have to prove it all the time.

A combination of license, indulgence, and completely unearned praise can produce a horrid child. That is obvious. On the other hand, inadequate doses of praise can produce an inordinate appetite for attention gained by any means, fair or foul. Under other

circumstances, similar inadequacy can produce a completely defeated individual, sure that he is not worth much, sure that no one could really like him or want him. The future mental health of either of these individuals rests on a very insecure foundation.

On this basis, I feel that praise is an essential ingredient of the mental hygiene structure. Underdosage of praise is likely to be more damaging than overdosage, and the ordinary home situation is much more likely to call a child's attention to his faults than to his successes. Certainly modern education has discovered that success and praise are powerful stimulants. Because they are stimulants, they must be used cautiously but, because they are essentials, they must not be completely eliminated from the emotional diet as too dangerous to monkey with.

Consistency is the third support of a mental health program. Affection and praise are vitally necessary but the third element, consistency, is required to build up faith in the first two. In addition to accentuating and re-enforcing affection and praise, consistency lays a foundation for belief in cause and effect. If we learn early in life that certain behavior on our part is very likely to produce predictable results on the part of other people we acquire the working principles of a way of living. A belief in predictability arises from having lived in a setting where consistent predictability existed.

Think for a minute of how we rely on consistency. We buy our winter coal ahead. We expect our alarm clock to go off tomorrow as it has in the past, and we

risk important meetings on our faith in its consistent performance. We expect our friends to look and talk and act the way they always have. Some of us expect to be able to eat cheese and drink coffee at midnight and then sleep. Others do not. If the pattern breaks down, we are surprised and disturbed.

Above almost everything else, the ability to live happily with other humans rests on faith in the continuity and consistency of relationships. In most of our contacts with people, we are so accustomed to taking consistency for granted that its absence is profoundly shocking. As a matter of course, we expect our language to be understood. When someone does not understand, we yell at him as if he were deaf because our pattern has been broken. We even expect our gestures to be understood. If we smile we expect people to understand that we are friendly. Even more significantly, if someone smiles at us, we expect *them* to mean that they are friendly. If someone beckons, "Come here" and smiles, we understand, "Come here; I won't hurt you." Our relationships with the world and with people are based on a set of signals which we have learned and which we expect to be followed by predictable events. If we distrust the signals, we distrust the world and the people in it.

Consistency begins at home. There we learn the day-by-day pattern of living. It rests chiefly on parental attitudes and parental behavior. If you can predict what you may do tomorrow from what you have been permitted to do through a series of yesterdays, you acquire confidence in foresight and faith in

your ability to "get along." If what you are permitted to do today depends, not on what you were permitted to do yesterday, but on parental indigestion, the stock market, the number of last night's highballs, or the latest article on child training, published in the Sunday paper, then, as long as you live, you may never know where you stand in relation to any other human being.

Although we have been talking about consistency as if it were a separate item, it is, of course, an essential part of the entire structure. Physical care must be consistently carried out. Affection must be provided without serious variations over long periods. Praise cannot be effective if behavior which earns it one day earns only scorn or ridicule the next. Consistency is valuable in itself, but it also lends additional value to other human relationships.

It would be perfectly just to raise the objection that consistency is one quality upon which we cannot count today. All that any of us knows is that everything is changing. Might it not be better to accustom children to constant and violent change, to shifting values, to friends turned into foes overnight? The answer is that some stable human relationships are necessary to provide strength with which to meet external change. A few fixed points are essential and the personal relationships within the home are the most favorable base on which this stability can be established.

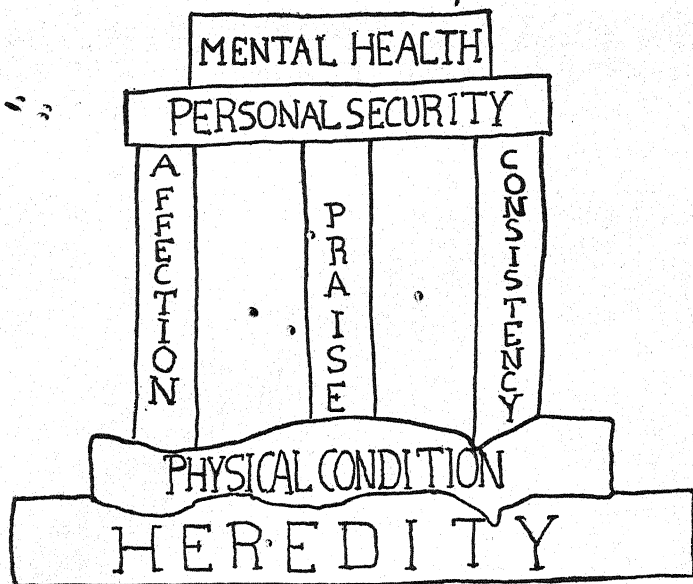
Constant moving from home to home, from apartment to apartment, from trailer camp to trailer

camp may leave a child very few fixed points except the fact that he has the same father and mother. If a child, even under such conditions, finds consistent parental affection, discipline, care, and protection, these factors can compensate for his unstable external environment.

There are probably a number of ways of training children to be happy and useful citizens, but I am sure that there is one method that always leads to failure. This unsuccessful method consists in adopting one scheme for a week, changing to another equally good plan for two or three days, shifting to a third, and finally returning to some modification of one of the plans you tried before. Such inconsistency results only in confusion.

Today there is great temptation to follow such a vacillating course. So much interest in mental health has been worked up by carefully planned educational programs that the very words "mental hygiene" have acquired sales value. You can hardly pick up a popular magazine, the science section of a daily paper, or go to a meeting of any child welfare group without reading or hearing about new methods of mental hygiene. Some of what is written is pure nonsense, but much of it is sound. The trouble is that it is not tied together in a unified program. Much of the good advice is focused on particular problems such as feeding or toilet habits, as if you could train a child at one end at a time. For the interested, conscientious, enthusiastic but apprehensive, ordinary parent, such advice is likely to result in patchwork effort. In any

teaching, a clear idea of what you are trying to teach, backed up by consistency, will compensate for many errors of method. For that reason, consistency is a vital part of any mental health program.



XII

THE STRUCTURE OF MENTAL HEALTH

THE FACT THAT AFFECTION, PRAISE, AND CONSISTENCY form the connecting links between a reasonably sound constitution and the expectancy of mental health is of vast importance. If the preservation of mental health required mastery of complicated techniques or knowledge of theories beyond the experience of ordinary individuals, the entire program would have to be placed in the hands of experts. This

is not the case. The qualities which are necessary for the support of mental health exist abundantly in ordinary families. They are so common that their significance is often overlooked. A mental health program must constantly call attention to their value.

Calling attention to the value of affection, praise, and consistency is, of itself, not enough. These three elements must be built into the structure of family life. This mental health structure must be lived in, not only by the children, but also by the parents. Just the mother living in it is not enough. The father belongs inside too, and, if there are grandparents in the home, they must fit in or the planning must be done so as to allow for them as an extra influence.

Within this structure children must be given a chance to live and learn. They must try and fail, be hurt by failure, and comforted by secure affection. They should have a chance to express anger and hatred and love and fear before these become overpowering emotions. They should learn about people and about sex. They should learn a mother tongue, a set of values and standards useful in the world in which they will live. Within this structure they should practice being adults. Finally, they should leave to build a structure of their own.

No miracles will be produced by such a program. All that can be hoped is that a generation of children might grow up with somewhat less damage to their self-respect and a greater sense of personal security. They should live more happily with their fellow men. Their children should start where the parents left off,

so that a few steps forward might be taken during each generation.

With the hope that what has been said will explain their value, I present, here, the simple rules which seem to offer the basis for a setting in which mental health can grow.

1. Give, do not barter, affection, so that the child may feel *We* more often than *Me*.
2. Avoid the use of belittling, shame, or ridicule, so that the child may believe that he is worthwhile and capable of becoming a useful and desired adult. Do not be afraid to use praise.
3. Teach values and meanings which relate to the actual world in which the child lives. Be consistent, stick to a method which is yours, and do not try to be an omniscient Saint.
4. Encourage independence and responsibility rather than obedience.
5. Remember that if you train a child properly, you should lose him. Then your job is done, and done well.